

WORKS BY SIDNEY AND BEATRICE WEBB

Press

ENGLISH POOR LAW POLICY, 1834-1908

IN this forthcoming volume, the authors of *Industrial Democracy* and *English Local Government* present what is practically a history of the English Poor Law, from the Report of the Royal Commission of 1832-4 down to that of the Royal Commission of 1905-9. For this work they have analysed, not only the statutes, but also the bewildering array of General and Special Orders, Circulars, Minutes, Inspector's exhortations, and unpublished letters, by means of which the Poor Law Commissioners, the Poor Law Board, and the Local Government Board have sought to direct the policy of the Boards of Guardians. No such history has before been attempted. For the first time the gradual development of policy can be traced, with regard to children, to the sick, to the aged and infirm, to vagrants, to the able-bodied, etc. The reader is enabled to watch the gradual and almost unconscious evolution, from out of the "principles of 1834," what may be called the "principles of 1908"; being the lines of policy to which the experience of the last three-quarters of a century has brought the Poor Law administrator of to-day.

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Demy 8vo, pp. xxvi and 664 (1907). Price 16s. net.

ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(THE PARISH AND THE COUNTY)

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT

THIS work, the result of eight years' research into the manuscript records of the Parish and the County all over England and Wales—from Northumberland to Cornwall, from Cardigan to Kent—combines history and description in a continuous narrative of extraordinary interest. Avoiding the questions of the origin of English local institutions, and even of their mediæval development, the authors plunge at once into a vivid description of the Parish Officers and the Vestry Quarter Sessions and the Justices of the Peace; the Lord-Lieutenant and the High Sheriff, together with all the other authorities by which the internal administration was actually carried on. An entirely new view is presented of the social and political development of Parish Vestry and Quarter Sessions, of their relations to the Squire and the Incumbent, and of their attitude towards Parliament and the problems of their age. But the book is more than a contribution to history and political science. Practically all the counties of England and Wales, and literally hundreds of parishes, find place in this unique record of life and manners, in which are embedded not a few dramatic episodes of absorbing interest. It is a new picture of English life between 1689 and 1835 as it actually was in country and town, with graphic tracings of its results on national progress and on the social and economic problems by which we are now confronted.

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ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(THE MANOR AND THE BOROUGH)

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT

In this second instalment of their *English Local Government* the authors apply their method of combined history and analysis to the fascinating story of the towns and the manorial communities, of which several hundreds find mention, belonging to all the counties of England and Wales. An interesting new account is given, from unpublished materials, of the organisation and development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the Manor and its several Courts, with picturesque glimpses of the hitherto undescribed part played by the Jury in the common-field agriculture. But the Manor is shown to be also the starting-point for a whole series of constitutional developments, passing through grade after grade of Manorial Borough, hitherto undescribed, into the complete Municipal Corporation. This, too, is analysed and described in a way never before attempted, so as to make the strangely interesting life of the towns live before us. A special chapter is devoted to the Boroughs of Wales, in which their national peculiarities are brought out. Their extensive study of the manuscript records enable the authors to set forth the inner working of the "Municipal Democracies" that existed alongside the chartered oligarchies,

English Local Government—contd.

with their many analogies to modern American cities; and to bring vividly to notice the conditions and limitations of successive Democratic government. There is an interesting sketch of English hierarchies of town government, chief among them being the Cinque Ports, the constitutional position of which is presented in a new light. The anomalous history of the City of Westminster is explored by the light of the unpublished archives of its peculiar municipal organisation. An altogether novel view is presented of the constitutional development of the greatest municipality of all, the Corporation of the City of London, to which no fewer than 124 pages are devoted. The work concludes with a picturesque account of the "Municipal Revolution" of 1835, and the Homeric combat of Brougham and Lyndhurst which ended in the Municipal Reform Act of 1835.

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ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT (STATUTORY AUTHORITIES)

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT

THIS volume, completing the account of the constitutional structure of English Local Government, deals with a field hitherto even less explored than the Parish, the County, the Manor, and the Borough. Interspersed among these organisations there existed innumerable others, which might be termed, in the slang of to-day, "Ad Hoc bodies," formed for specific purposes. Among these were the Courts of Sewers, in town and country, the hitherto unexplored records of which yield an altogether new vision of local life in London and Lincolnshire, Somerset and the Fen country. The Turnpike Trusts give us two centuries of experience in roadmaking and road maintenance, which is not without its special interest for our own day. The Incorporated Guardians of the Poor of the eighteenth century are found to have anticipated many of the devices of those of the nineteenth and twentieth. The hundreds of bodies of Improvement Commissioners, the records of none of which have been printed, or, indeed, hitherto scarcely glanced at, present us with a view of the real municipal administration of the towns, for which students have sought in vain in the Municipal Corporation archives. All these "Ad Hoc" bodies, like our own School Boards and Boards of Guardians, had their own constitutional life and development, from which much is to be learnt.

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Industrial Democracy—contd.

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CHAPTER I

• THE ABLE-BODIED UNDER THE POOR LAW

THE reader of the Report of 1834 is struck by the narrow limits which the members of that celebrated Royal Commission set to their work. It is not merely that they practically left out of sight all the various classes of non-able-bodied pauperism, about which, as we have seen, they hardly at all concerned themselves. What is more remarkable is that neither in their Report, nor in the bulky volumes of their evidence, do we find any notice of Able-bodied Destitution, as distinguished from Able-bodied Pauperism. There might, in fact, so far as their proceedings were concerned, have been in 1834 no Able-bodied Destitution except such as was being dealt with by the Poor Law. If this had been true, it would have been a remarkable testimony to the efficacy, in one respect, of the old Poor Law. Unfortunately it was not true. We know from contemporary evidence that between 1815 and 1834 there were whole sections of the population who, to use the modern terminology, were Unemployed or Underemployed, Sweated or Vagrant, existing in a state of chronic destitution, and dragging on some sort of a living on intermittent small earnings of their own, or of other people's, or on the alms of the charitable:—handloom-weavers and framework-knitters displaced by machinery; millwrights and shipwrights thrown out by the violent fluctuations in the volume of machine-making and ship-building; “frozen out” gardeners and riverside workers rendered idle every winter, and masses of labourers stagnating at the ports or wandering aimlessly up and down

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the roads in search of work. With all this Able-bodied Destitution, not only spasmodically subsidised by public subscriptions, but also perpetually importuning both the town Overseer and the rural Constable for assistance from the rates, the Royal Commission of 1832-34 chose not to concern itself. We find in its voluminous proceedings no statistics of Unemployment, no statement as to fluctuations of trade, no account of the destitution produced by the new machines, no estimate of the swarms of Vagrants who were being "passed" by the Justices, at the expense of the rates, from North to South, from East to West, and back again. The Commissioners concentrated their whole attention on one plague spot—the demoralisation of character and waste of wealth produced in the agricultural districts by an hypertrophied Poor Law. Over a large part of the country and in the greatest of all the nation's industries, practically all the labourers were, in the period of healthy manhood, chronically underpaid and underemployed—a state of things which had existed for half a century. To meet this evil the Justices of the Peace had, at the end of the eighteenth century, devised the famous "Allowance System," by which the weekly earnings of every adult labourer were automatically made up, out of the Poor Rate, to a low subsistence level for himself and his family. This device, which, it is interesting to note, was resorted to as an alternative to the enforcement of a legal minimum wage, gradually dragged the whole population of the agricultural districts into the meshes of the Poor Law. The farmers, secure of a constant supply of labour, lowered wages. The labourers, secure of subsistence, progressively lowered the quantity and quality of their effort. The degradation of character and the destruction of all healthy relationship between employer and employed, entailed by this fatal mixing of Poor Relief and wages, had disheartened a whole generation of Poor Law administrators. What was more keenly realised by the Parliament of 1832 was that the rates levied for this service were absorbing a large portion of the rental value of the landlords' estates and were beginning to threaten the profits of the capitalists. In short, it was a particularly

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démoralising kind of Able-bodied Pauperism; and not the existence of Able-bodied Destitution, that led the Ministry of 1832 to appoint a Poor Law Commission.

The Commissioners of 1832-34 made short work of this swollen Poor Law. In agreement with much of the economic opinion of the time they would perhaps have liked to have abolished all forms of gratuitous Public Assistance. This being impracticable, they sought to restrict it to the "relief" of actual "destitution." But what they were most intent on was putting an end to the parasitic condition into which agricultural labour had fallen throughout the South of England. By one and the same device they proposed to cut off from the farmer all labour that he did not wholly pay for, and to deprive the labourer of all income that he did not wholly earn.

It was to attain this double end that they recommended that no relief should be given to able-bodied persons except in a well-regulated Workhouse; by which they meant a place that would be less agreeable than the home of an independent labourer who was working for his livelihood. This deterrent relief, they argued, would, whilst preventing any risk of starvation, induce the labourer to work in order to keep his employment, and would compel the farmer, without any legal fixing of wages, to pay enough for the labourer and his family to live on. Unfortunately for their reputation, the Commissioners did not limit their ingenious prescription to the one form of Able-bodied Pauperism that they had studied. They proposed that the "Workhouse Test" should be applied on all occasions, in all districts, to all able-bodied applicants for public assistance; whether these had been thrown out of work in crowds by fluctuations of trade, or definitely displaced by new machinery and new methods of working it. Finally, for some undisclosed reason, the Commissioners prescribed the same treatment for the Vagrant, a person into whose peculiarities they had certainly not inquired. They recommended that this most sturdy and recalcitrant of all the sub-classes of Able-bodied Paupers should be altogether delivered from the hands of the County Magistrates and the Constables, by whom they had hitherto

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been provided for, and that they should be thrown simply on the Poor Law, to be offered, like all other able-bodied persons, the open door of a disciplinary Workhouse.

Thus, there was to be, as soon as was practicable, one Local Authority, and one only, applying, to all the various sub-classes of the destitute Able-bodied applying for relief in any part of England, one uniform method, namely, their admission to a residential institution, where they could, as a matter of deterrent discipline rather than with any idea of profit, be set to hard work, under disciplinary conditions and upon plain diet. The wives and children of such able-bodied persons were also to be relieved only in institutions. But the Commissioners had been so much impressed with the evils inherent in General Mixed Workhouses that they elaborately specified, over and over again, that the Workhouses for the Able-bodied were to be entirely distinct from the buildings in which the infirm aged and the children were accommodated; that they were to be under separate officers and separate management; and that they were expressly not to form part of one great establishment containing other classes of paupers. To the policy thus propounded for dealing with all the sub-classes of the destitute Able-bodied together with their dependents; Parliament impliedly gave its general approval by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

The Poor Law Commissioners of 1835-47 promptly embodied the recommendations of the Commission of 1834 in a series of special Orders issued to Unions up and down the country, which culminated in the general Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844. The new policy achieved one great success. Within a few years, in the rural parishes of Southern England, the resolute offer of the Workhouse brought to an end—so far as Able-bodied men were concerned—the demoralising chronic Poor Law relief of the Under-paid and the Under-employed. Speaking broadly, all the able-bodied farm labourers who had remained in the villages and were in employment at all were maintained without the aid of the rates, with the result that their wages had somewhat risen and the wage-earning had become somewhat less intermittent. How far

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this policy had succeeded at the cost of driving surplus labourers into the towns, and thereby increasing the mass of Able-bodied Destitution there, remains uncertain.

In London, and in the manufacturing towns and the seaports, where quite a different kind of Able-bodied Destitution existed, the new policy proved less practicable. The Poor Law Commissioners themselves came to recognise that, even where the Local Authorities offered no objection, it was undesirable to apply the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order in places where fluctuations in the volume of employment were violent and periodic, and manifestly beyond the control of either employers or wage-earners. An Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order, they observed, would in such places necessarily have to be suspended in times of depression of trade, "and," to quote the words of the Local Government Board's letter of May 12th, 1877, "there is nothing more calculated to weaken the force of the regulations of the Board than to be obliged to abrogate them whenever a period of pressure arises." In the large centres of population, accordingly, the attempt to prohibit Outdoor Relief was avowedly abandoned, and it is significant that—at the instance of the Central Authority itself—the area and population placed under the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order exclusively have since steadily diminished.

The alternative device for carrying out the "Principles" of the 1834 Report, of which the Poor Law Commissioners urged the adoption, upon the Boards of Guardians of the Metropolis and the manufacturing districts, was that of the Labour Yard, or Outdoor Relief in return for a test of work by the able-bodied man. Either under the Labour Test Order or under the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order, the opening of a Labour Yard, and the refusal of any Outdoor Relief to able-bodied men except through the Labour Yard, was, by the Poor Law Inspectors and by official Circulars, persistently pressed on the Boards of Guardians of London and the great towns for which the Central Authority had abandoned the policy of the Prohibitory Order, as the proper way of treating the Destitute Able-bodied who applied for relief—irrespective of whether they

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were Unemployed, Under-employed, Sweated, or Unemployable. This was to abandon, as impracticable, the confident hopes of the 1834 Commissioners, that Outdoor Relief to the Able-bodied could be made to cease out of the land. The number of men (with their dependents) thus given relief in return for a task of work rose, in times of bad trade, to a great height. Thus in the Lady-day Quarter, 1843, nearly 40,000 healthy able-bodied men, representing a population of 165,000, were being employed in the Poor Law Labour Yards, on account of their want of work or their insufficient earnings when at work—the Unemployed and the Under-employed thus relieved by the Poor Law comprising large numbers of men thrown out of employment in Lancashire and the West Riding by depression of trade. A member of the Bradford Board of Guardians, in 1842 estimated that “nearly two-thirds of the relief is given to able-bodied paupers.” At the East End of London, the number of men unemployed in 1848 was so great that the Poplar Guardians seriously complained of the strain imposed upon them. The Guardians, viewing the pressure of “applications by able-bodied men for relief, and which the Board truly believes arises from various causes of temporary cessation of work in the docks and large manufactories, are of opinion that it is expedient that such relief should be administered more extensively than is usually considered admissible by the late Poor Law Commissioners or the Poor Law Board to that class of person; the Guardians at the same time ordering the employment of stone-breaking to the fullest extent to be continued.” In 1847, even in many rural Unions, “the workhouses. . . became full during the winter,” and special permission had to be given for Outdoor Relief to the Able-bodied. “In Caxton and Arrington, and Newmarket, the necessity for Out-relief recurs every winter. In Hinckley the difficulty was only partial, owing to a dispute between the stocking weavers and masters about wages. In Clifton and Chipping Sodbury the Workhouse was crowded through the want of employment of the hatters”; and these Unemployed men had to be given Outdoor Relief. Nor were these merely isolated and exceptional cases.

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From that time down to 1886 the Central Authority found no better suggestion to make to Boards of Guardians with regard to the Able-bodied men thrown out of work by depression of trade or seasonal cessation of employment—failing appropriate Workhouse accommodation—than the grant of Outdoor Relief in return for labour. The “opening of the Labour Yard” became a periodical occurrence at every period of stress.

There was, however, another disappointment to those who hoped that the “Principles of 1834” would get rid, at any rate, of Able-bodied Pauperism. The professional Vagrant was quick to perceive the advantages of dealing with an Authority limited to merely relieving destitution at the crisis of destitution. It was soon found that, as the Guardians of Lambeth and Colchester declared in 1841, the “trampers” made the “Union house a lodging-house,” and that, in fact, “the distribution of Workhouses at short distances over the whole country, and the regular enforcement of the right of strangers and wayfarers to relief” had actually encouraged what the Poor Law Commissioners of 1846 euphemistically termed “wandering habits among the poor.” The increase in the number of Vagrants thus making use of the Workhouse was so great that the Central Authority had to retrace its steps, and, after many shifts and changes of policy, strive to insist on the exclusion of Vagrants from the General Mixed Workhouse, and to urge the provision—which practically never was made—of a “separate building devoted exclusively to the reception of this class of poor.” What was eventually established throughout England and Wales was the Casual Ward as a part of the Workhouse, usually under the same roof or within the same curtilage, and under the same Master.

Meanwhile, the “offer of the House” was failing as a test in a way that the authors of the Report of 1834 could not have foreseen, and for which they were certainly not responsible. What they recommended was a series of separate institutions for the several classes of paupers under entirely separate management. What the Poor Law Commissioners of 1835-47 insisted on establishing was the

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General Mixed Workhouse, against which the Report of 1834 had protested. In due course the General Mixed Workhouse, including, under one roof and one management, the young and the old, the sick and the healthy, the Able-bodied and the non-Able-bodied, proved, by its very promiscuity and uniformity of regimen, actually attractive to certain types of Able-bodied paupers. It may indeed be said that this was an inevitable result of placing all the different classes under one Destitution Authority. To a Board of Guardians burdened with having to provide for the sick, the orphans and the aged (of whom there were always hundreds in chronic pauperism), the very ideal of the 1834 Report as regards the Able-bodied—an institution standing always ready, swept and garnished, but normally empty: a form of relief to be always on offer but seldom accepted—seemed a fantastic extravagance. It appeared obviously more reasonable to admit the few Able-bodied paupers of good times to the General Mixed Workhouse as exceptions; with the inevitable result that they found themselves in conditions that were certainly more agreeable, if not more “eligible,” to the apathetic loafer than working continuously for long hours at the low wages of the unskilled labourer. And to him, as to the professional Vagrant, it was an additional attraction that the Poor Law was strictly limited to relieving him at the crisis of his destitution, leaving him free to come and go as he chose, and to live as he pleased, without even the curb of official cognisance and observation of his doings, whenever he was not actually in receipt of relief.

This unexpected outcome of the “Workhouse Test” began to be noticed in 1868. The pressure on the accommodation of the Metropolitan Workhouses, and the mixing together of so many different classes of inmates, made it impossible, as the Inspector, Mr. Corbett, pointed out, “to apply the Workhouse as a test of destitution to single Able-bodied men.” “In urging upon Boards of Guardians in the Metropolis,” repeated his successor, Mr. Longley, “as I have lately had occasion to do almost daily, the application of the Workhouse Test, I have not infrequently been met by the startling admission that the Workhouse

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is attractive to paupers; that there are many persons in the Workhouse furnishes no test of destitution. All arguments in support of the Workhouse Test which assume the existence of a well-regulated Workhouse (to use the language of the Poor Law Commissioners of Inquiry, 1833) must fail at once when addressed to Guardians whose Workhouse offers attractions to the indolent. And I have reason to think that the aversion to the proper and free use of the Workhouse which distinguishes many Metropolitan Boards of Guardians, is in some measure due to the failure of the Workhouses, as at present administered, to satisfy the essential conditions of their establishment." Mr. Longley definitely ascribed the inconvenient laxity which had come over Workhouse administration, not to any shortcomings of the Boards of Guardians, but to the very nature of the General Mixed Workhouse for all classes, which the Central Authority had substituted for the series of specialised institutions recommended in the Report of 1834. "The presence in a Workhouse," he said, "of the sick, or of any class in whose favour the ordinary discipline must be relaxed, and who receive special indulgences, has an almost inevitable tendency to impair the general discipline of the establishment." "*The Orders*," he expressly added, "*are in some way responsible*." The General Consolidated Order of 1847, which had, in 1871, already remained for twenty-four years without revision, had been framed with "primary reference . . . to the . . . smaller Mixed Workhouses which are, at present at least, a necessity in rural districts; and they fail in many particulars to satisfy the special conditions of Indoor Relief in London." The very improvement in the Workhouses, which, under the Central Authority's own pressure, was taking place between 1866 and 1875, had, in fact, brought to light the inherent drawback of the General Mixed Workhouse which the Poor Law Commissioners of 1835-47 had imposed on England and Wales; which their influence in 1845 imposed on Ireland; and which the example of England and Ireland has since induced Scotland to imitate.

To remedy this unexpected form of Able-bodied

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Pauperism, the able Inspectorate of 1869-86 proposed to reverse the calamitous policy insisted on by the Poor Law Commissioners of 1835-47, prescribed as to General Mixed Workhouses by the General Consolidated Order of 1847, and to carry out the proposal of the 1834 Report by establishing separate institutions for the Able-bodied, expressly devised for deterring them from applying for or accepting relief. Hence the Able-bodied, like the children and the sick, were now to be accommodated by themselves. Thus, we find, from 1871 onwards, the idea of the "Test Workhouse," an institution set apart exclusively for the Able-bodied, where they could be subjected (to use Mr. Longley's words) to "such a system of labour, discipline and restraint as shall be sufficient to outweigh," in the estimation of the inmates, "the advantages" which they enjoy. Mr. Longley declared that the main object of the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 had been, not exclusively, or even principally, the better accommodation of the sick, but the introduction of *classification by institutions*, with the double object of, on the one hand, an improved treatment of the sick, and, on the other, "the establishment of a stricter and more deterrent discipline in Workhouses." Circumstances, he said, had delayed the accomplishment of the latter purpose, but it was now time for the Central Authority to "urge upon Guardians the establishment in Workhouses of a more distinctly deterrent system of discipline and diet than has hitherto been secured, involving a reconsideration of the conditions of pauper labour and service in Workhouses." Such "Able-bodied Test Workhouses" were established, at first, at Poplar, and then in a few other Unions. In them, as in the Casual Wards, we watch the Destitution Authority presently seeking to depart from the principle of merely relieving destitution, at the crisis of destitution, and asking Parliament to give powers of compulsory detention.

Thus, we find to-day, in the treatment of Able-bodied Pauperism by one Union or another, not the simple and uniform method recommended by the 1834 Report, namely, the offer of maintenance in a deterrent Workhouse, with freedom to come and go at their will, but many

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different forms both of institutional and of domiciliary relief, one or other of which is granted, not according to the character of the case—whether, for instance, the applicant belongs to the class of Unemployed, Under-employed, Sweated or Vagrant,—but according to the varying policy of particular Boards of Guardians at particular times. We have the persistence, in the great majority of Unions in England and Wales, and in all the Irish Unions, of admission to a General Mixed Workhouse, as the ordinary plan of dealing with the Able-bodied male applicants; and for Able-bodied women, of the grant of unconditional and inadequate Outdoor Relief to eke out their scanty earnings. On the other hand, we see in use, recommended and even prescribed by the Local Government Board, at least three distinct forms of specialised treatment of the Able-bodied applicant for relief. In some places he gets Outdoor Relief in return for work. Under other circumstances he is offered nothing but maintenance in a severe “Test Workhouse.” Elsewhere he finds himself, even if a resident, referred only to the Casual Ward.

(A) *The Persistence of Outdoor Relief*

Speaking broadly, it may be said that the seventy-five years' efforts of the Central Authority and its Inspectorate have succeeded, so far as concerns able-bodied men who are themselves in health, and whose dependents are in health, in getting rid of the grant of Outdoor Relief, as an ordinary or systematic method of continuous provision under the Poor Law. This result has, however, been achieved only at the cost, first, of resorting at intervals to the very unsatisfactory Outdoor Labour Test, which we shall presently describe, and, secondly, of leaving certain loopholes in the nominally impenetrable wall of prohibition, through which, in seasons of severe stress, and for exceptional cases at all times, the Guardians can allow individuals to pass. As these loopholes have of late years shown a dangerous tendency to enlargement, it is necessary to consider them in some detail.

(i.) *Sudden or Urgent Necessity*

We have first to notice that, in every populous Union there will be, on an average, one or two cases every day—in some Unions *half a dozen cases every day*—in which able-bodied men will be given food by the Relieving Officer on account of “sudden or urgent necessity.” These cases which must represent at least 10,000 different men in the course of a year, and possibly a much larger number, have more than doubled in number during the past decade. Unfortunately, no statistics are available of the total number so relieved, the duration of the relief, the frequency of individual recurrence, or even its total cost. We cannot regard it as satisfactory that every year there should be, without the prior knowledge of any public authority, as many as 10,000 men arriving at such a crisis of destitution as to be entitled to instant food; or that they should receive public assistance in this form without, in many, if not most of the cases, anything more effective being done to render them self-supporting citizens. We see here the characteristic defect of the Destitution Authority, that it has no means of knowing anything of these 10,000 men prior to the crisis of their destitution, when a helping hand would have been more useful than at the crisis itself, and no machinery for keeping them in view after the crisis. Out of the darkness these starving men apply to the Relieving Officer; he visits their miserable abodes and leaves with them their leaves of bread; then—unless they choose to attend the next Relief Committee of the Board of Guardians—into the darkness they disappear again, until their next application. If the Board of Guardians chooses not to “offer the House” to such as apply for further relief, or if these persons refuse to accept an order for admission, they may continue in “urgent necessity,” when the Relieving Officer has no alternative but to go on supplying just enough food to keep them from starvation. Cases occasionally go on in this way from fortnight to fortnight, until something happens—it may be eviction from the lodging, it may be an attack of sickness which compels entrance to the Poor

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Law Infirmary, it may be death from lack of other things than the bread that the Relieving Officer doles out. What does not happen is any effective public assistance in securing employment at wages, or in providing such physically or mentally restorative treatment as would fit the men for employment.

(ii.) *Reported Exceptions*

But there is another loophole through which the Guardians grant Outdoor Relief to able-bodied men, even without the Outdoor Labour Test. Under both the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order and the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order, the Guardians are allowed to grant Outdoor Relief in contravention of the other provisions of the Order, provided that they report the particulars to the Local Government Board, which, in each case, formally sanctions the grant. When carefully employed for selected cases this loophole is found of great use by experienced Poor Law administrators. It is, in fact, frequently employed by most Boards of Guardians in Urban Unions to tide respectable families over short periods of unemployment, when the Labour Yard is not open. We understand that the grants, when reported, are almost invariably sanctioned, though with adverse comment and warning, when this is thought necessary; and that when the cases from any one Union become numerous, the Guardians are pressed to "open the Labour Yard," and set the men to work. Unfortunately, the Local Government Board does not publish any particulars of the reports which it is thus receiving every fortnight from nearly all the great Urban Unions, nor even a statement of the total number of grants sanctioned each year. All the information that we have been able to obtain on the point is the number of able-bodied men granted Outdoor Relief on one day "on account of want of work, or other causes," without its being usually specified in how many cases the men were put on the Outdoor Labour Test. What is disquieting is that these numbers show an increase from 789 on January 1, 1897, and 581 in 1902, to 1585 on January 1, 1904.

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to no fewer than 7872 in 1905, and to 2235 in 1907. And we learn that, of the 7872 who were being so relieved in one day in 1905, no fewer than 4632 were not "under a labour test in labour yards." These men are seldom allowed to have Outdoor Relief for many weeks together, so that we fear it must be inferred that, if the Local Government Board would publish particulars of the cases that it formally sanctions during each year, we should find that, in addition to the ten thousand or so relieved on account of sudden or urgent necessity, at least *ten or twenty thousand more able-bodied men are, in the course of the year, thus temporarily in receipt of Outdoor Relief without any task of work*, and—what we regard as far more serious—without anything effective being done to improve them, either physically or mentally, or to get them into wage-earning employment again.

(iii.) *Going out to Look for Work*

A third loophole, of a somewhat different kind, by which relief is granted without the man residing in the Workhouse, is that afforded by the opportunity which some Boards of Guardians give to selected inmates to go out in order to look for work, whilst leaving wife and children inside the institution. This is against all the precepts of 1834. But the various Boards of Guardians realised a few years ago that to insist on a man when he left the Workhouse necessarily taking with him his wife and children, was virtually to condemn the man to remain in the Workhouse for the rest of his life. "It is impossible," said a Lambeth Guardian, "whatever the man's wishes may be, for a man to go out of the Workhouse with a wife and three or four children, obtain a room, and obtain work in one day; no human being could do it; and the result is that he would keep in the Workhouse, because he would not make the attempt. It is an impossible thing to do." Some Boards of Guardians took thought how they could help such men to regain their independence. "If," continued our informant, "it was a man who seemed able-bodied with a wife and family,

we might execute our discretionary power, and say to him, if he had got a fairly good character: 'We will allow you to go out for a fortnight without your wife and children with a view of obtaining work.' We should mark on that paper that he should reappear in a fortnight's time. As a matter of fact, I may say that discretionary power of allowing a man out without his wife and children has worked very efficiently, and in a great many cases they have ultimately taken their discharge. . . . We use our discretion. . . . If a man is not in very good health, possibly he has been in the infirmary first and has then been removed to the Workhouse, we should say the man looks as if he requires a rest, and the Medical Officer gives his views of the man's condition, and whether he requires rest. He might say he should have six weeks' or a month's rest. We should mark that on the paper, and in eight weeks' time he would come before us. No case is lost sight of." But so great is the fear that men will leave their wives and families on the hands of the Guardians that any such humane consideration is contrary to the General Consolidated Order; and it has been strongly objected to by other Guardians. It is in vain that it is pointed out that, in practice, it is just as easy for a man to desert his wife and family when they have all gone out together, as when he has gone out alone. In fact, father and mother together may rid themselves of their children at any time by the simple expedient of sending them back alone to the Workhouse gate (where they have to be taken in), the parents disappearing into the darkness. There is, in all these cases, the same nominal liability to, and (owing to lack of organised pursuit) the same chance of practical immunity from, criminal prosecution and punishment. The humane consideration of the Boards of Guardians in letting the man go off by himself to look for work—sometimes man and wife without the children—has been amply justified by the results. At Lambeth, in forty-four cases during 1904-6, the man, after more or less interval, found his feet, and took his wife and children off the Guardians' hands. Sometimes it took three or four weeks, sometimes as much as nine months

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before the man could build up a home. In some cases the men failed the first time, and had to return. In one case, even after a successful start had been made, the family had to be re-admitted; and yet on a subsequent attempt the man found his feet and managed to keep his family.

(iv.) *Are Women Able-bodied?*

But though as many as 30,000, 40,000 or even 50,000 healthy and Able-bodied men may now receive Outdoor Relief, in the course of each year, without any task of work, in one or other of the ways just described, nineteen-twentieths of the Outdoor Relief granted to physically competent persons is given to women. So far as we can discover from the official statistics, there were in England and Wales alone, on January 1, 1907, 62,240 healthy Able-bodied adult persons (other than the occupants of the Casual Ward) simultaneously in receipt of Outdoor Relief on that day. Of these only 2,528 were men, and no fewer than 59,712 women.

In a small number of cases—we doubt whether they come to 5 per cent of the 59,712—these persons are single women, without children, not aged, and not distinctly ill or crippled, who nevertheless find themselves unable, perhaps from physical or mental debility, to earn the few shillings a week upon which such women will manage to exist. In about 276 of the Unions of England and Wales, selected we know not why, the Local Government Board regards such women as "Able-bodied" persons; and absolutely prohibits their Outdoor Relief. In about 374 other Unions, scattered indiscriminately among the rest, the Local Government Board does not regard such women as Able-bodied persons; and their Outdoor Relief, without any conditions, has remained for more than half a century lawful. We do not understand the ground of this distinction, and we think that the Boards of Guardians might reasonably have looked for a more definite declaration of policy with regard to this class. We see no reason why such able-bodied women,

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potentially competent to engage in industrial occupations, should not have made for them exactly the same provision that is desirable for men of like capacity.

But the case of the Able-bodied single woman or unencumbered widow, unable, though without children, to earn her extremely small maintenance, is rare. The vast majority of the 60,000 Able-bodied women on Outdoor Relief in England and Wales are not free to engage in industrial employment, because they are occupied by the care of young children dependent upon them. To rank these in any sense with the Able-bodied is only to obscure the problem. The Scottish Poor Law, more logical than the English classification, whilst prohibiting any form of relief to the Able-bodied, does not include as Able-bodied any women, however physically and mentally competent, who have young children dependent on them. In practice, the English Boards of Guardians make much the same distinction, granting Outdoor Relief pretty freely to widows, to the destitute wives of absentee husbands, and even to unmarried mothers, provided that such women have young children on their hands. In all these cases, in fact, it is recognised as misleading to proceed on the assumption that the refusal of relief will compel the women to be self-supporting. We have chosen so to organise the industrial world that the wife and children are normally supported by the industrial earnings of the husband and father, with the result that when women engage in industries their wages are habitually fixed at rates calculated to support themselves alone, without a family of children. If, by some mischance, the husband and father is withdrawn from the family group, the wife and mother is, with regard to self-support, under a double impossibility. She cannot, consistently with her legal obligation to rear her children properly, give her time and strength to wage-earning to the extent that modern competitive industry demands; and even if she could do so, she finds the woman's remuneration fixed on the basis of supporting one person, and not several. Hence it becomes practically indispensable, as it is only equitable, that there should be

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afforded to the mother bereft of the man upon whom she had been encouraged to depend suitable public assistance, not so much for herself, as to enable her to bring up the children whom the community, though the breadwinner is withdrawn, still expects her to rear.

Unfortunately, though English Boards of Guardians recognise the necessity of coming to the aid of widows with young children, they do not—largely, we think, because they are Destitution Authorities, relieving all sections indiscriminately—face the problem with any clearness of thought. We have been unable, in Union after Union, to make out whether these dispensers of public assistance regarded themselves as helping the Able-bodied woman, or as providing for the upbringing of the orphan children. The Central Authority in its Orders and Circulars—equally because it has to do with all the different sections—has oscillated from one conception to the other. The result is that, as we have seen in our chapter on “The Outdoor Relief of To-day,” there is the greatest possible diversity of practice. A few Boards restrict to the uttermost the grant of Outdoor Relief to widows with children; many refuse it to the widow with only one child, or with only two children, however young these may be; others grant only the quite inadequate sum of 1s. or 1s. 6d. per week per child, and nothing for the mother. Very few Guardians face the problem of how the widows’ children—for whom the Poor Law, by including them on the pauper roll, assumes definite responsibility—can, under these circumstances, be properly reared. As we have seen, in at least 100,000 cases, these children are growing up stunted, under-nourished, and to a large extent neglected, because the mother is so hard driven that she cannot properly attend to them. The irony of the situation appears in the fact that if the mother thereupon dies, the children will probably be “boarded-out” with a foster-parent, at a payment of 4s. to 5s. per week each, or three or four times as much as the Guardians paid for them before, or else taken into the Poor Law School or Cottage Homes at a cost of 12s. to 21s. per week each.

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We think that, in this matter, the practice of Scotland rather than that of England and Wales should be followed. Women having the care of children should, so long as such care is required from them, be wholly excluded from the category of the Able-bodied. The governing factor in such cases must be what the State considers best for the children. If the children are under school age, the case will be dealt with by the Local Health Authority. If any of them are of school age, the matter becomes one for the Local Education Authority. If the mother and her home are such as to offer a suitable environment for the children, Home Aliment really sufficient for their maintenance will be recommended by the Committees concerned and sanctioned by the Registrar of Public Assistance. If the mother, though not blameworthy, cannot be trusted to expend so much Aliment for the children's advantage, there is the alternative of sending them to the Day Industrial School, where they will be cared for from dawn till dark, the mother being thus set practically free to work, and dealt with as an unemployed Able-bodied person. Finally, if the mother, owing to her vicious habits or otherwise, does not provide a suitable environment for the children, there is no alternative but to remove them altogether from her care; when she will be set entirely free to work and to maintain herself as an Able-bodied person. In no case ought women burdened with the care of young children to be either regarded as Able-bodied, and refused adequate assistance for the children's upbringing, or relieved merely in respect of their own needs. Whenever the State decides to provide for the children's upbringing by leaving them in the mother's care, her services must be assumed (and required) to be devoted to them, and not to wage-earning. It is, in all these cases, the children who must be provided for, and (wherever this is not thought positively inexpedient) the mother must, by adequate Home Aliment, be enabled to look after them properly.

(B) *The Outdoor Labour Test*

In the Outdoor Labour Test as practised by the Boards of Guardians, and as sanctioned by the Central Authority to-day, the Principle of National Uniformity in the relief of Able-bodied Destitution, on which the Reformers of 1834 laid so much stress, is certainly not observed. In the kind of work offered, and in the amount of relief given, Boards of Guardians differ from one another, as they have constantly differed, between the two extremes of a mere pretence at work, with a good meal, a bed in a common lodging-house and a few halfpence in money on the one hand, and on the other painful penal labour upon relief physiologically insufficient to make good the wear and tear involved.

The Report of 1834 laid down the principle "that all who receive relief from the parish shall work for the parish exclusively, as hard as, and for less wages than, independent labourers work for individual employers." How to fulfil these conditions of "less eligibility," and yet maintain the man and his family in a state of health, has always been the crux of the Outdoor Labour Test. With strict administrators of the old fashioned type, the work provided has taken three or four forms only, such as oakum-picking, wood-chopping, corn-grinding, and, most of all, the breaking of granite or limestone by the hammer for use on the roads. Such work can be performed in a shed within the curtilage of the Workhouse—called the "Labour Yard," or the "Stone Yard"—usually differentiated into stalls in which the men work apart from each other, and can be supervised by the Workhouse Master, or by a "Labour Master" serving under him. Moreover, it lends itself to the exaction of a definite task of work from every man who is certified by the Medical Officer as capable of performing it. Since the Local Government Board's Circular of 1886 there has, however, been a reaction in favour of less repulsive forms of employment, such as digging, quarrying and road-making, and even doing odd jobs of cleaning, painting and decorating inside the various Poor Law Institutions. Thus, the Manchester

Board of Guardians in 1886-87, and again during 1895-1906, put men to excavate the land attached to its Workhouse at Crumpsall; the Chorlton Board of Guardians has men on Outdoor Relief working on its farm in all seasons of the year, the number rising in winter to several scores; the Leicester Board of Guardians puts hundreds of men to dig on its farm; the York Board of Guardians has, since 1886, set the able-bodied unemployed to bring into cultivation by spade labour the garden land adjoining the Workhouse; and the Bradford Board of Guardians employs the able-bodied men on Outdoor Relief in levelling and preparing for building the land adjacent to its institutions two miles from the centre of the town. Some Boards of Guardians have, despite the legally authoritative Orders of the Local Government Board, actually provided, for men rendered destitute by lack of employment, the very "work at wages" which has been so much deprecated. In January 1908 the Local Government Board discovered that, for twenty-nine years, the Guardians of the Ecclesall Bierlow Union, comprising a part of the Borough of Sheffield, had carried on a regular system of offering to every able-bodied man who applied for relief, not the Workhouse, but paid employment at piecework rates. The work was always hard and badly remunerated, and the amount of work limited, a single man being able to earn only 5s. 9d. in a week, the whole six days' attendance being exacted from him, whilst a man with a family was permitted to earn as much as 15s. 4d. in a week, though all were paid at the same piecework rate. No food was supplied to the men. They went out, like other workmen, at midday, to get their own meals, and at 5 P.M. they were paid their earnings for the day. These earnings were not entered as relief, but as wages to "journeymen woodcutters," or "journeymen stonecutters." The men were not entered as paupers or subject to disfranchisement. This system of "setting the poor to work," witnessed by the inspectors at every visit, went on from 1879 to 1908 without official objection, but was, in the latter year, peremptorily stopped by the Local Government Board.

Notwithstanding this reaction in favour of excavating or digging, or even gardening, on the part of some Boards of Guardians, or even the provision of employment at wages, the old-fashioned 'Labour Yard,' "Stone Yard," or "Test Yard," with its sheds and stalls, its stone-breaking and oakum-picking, its corn-grinding and wood-chopping, is still the typical form of the Outdoor Labour Test.

The amount of effort demanded from each individual differs from Union to Union even more widely than the character of the work. Where the work is most repulsive in character and the relief given is smallest, the task exacted is usually the most severe—thereby intensifying the lack of uniformity in the treatment of Able-bodied Destitution. Thus, the Leicester Board of Guardians of to-day, who set the Able-bodied men to work on the land, and give as much as 18s. a week in relief for a family, appear unable to exact any definite task or real effort from these relatively fortunate paupers. The men, we are told by one of the Guardians, do practically what they like; and "in frosty, very wet or snowy weather . . . they sit in the shed around the fire smoking and talking, and further confirming the habits of laziness which many of them have already acquired." On the other hand, the visitor to the severely managed Sheffield Labour Yard may watch each man at work at stone-breaking, strictly confined in a separate cell, receiving no money whatsoever, but merely his bare meals and a ticket for a common lodging-house, actually performing the specified task of making 10 cwt. of stone pass through a 2-inch mesh. In the neighbouring Unions of Holbeck and Hunslet the task for each man in the Labour Yard is as much as 20 cwt. of stone per day; at Cleobury Mortimer in 1890 it was 16 cwt.; at Dudley in 1904 and at Bradford in 1907 it was 15 cwt.; at King's Norton in 1894 it was 12 cwt., but in 1903 it was only 8 cwt.; at Wolstanton and Burslem in 1886 and 1893, and at Paddington in 1905, it was 10 cwt.; at Lewisham in 1888, at Wandsworth in 1892, and at Salford in 1907, it was 8 cwt.; at Ipswich we found it only 7 cwt., which was the amount at Brentford, 1886-1906, and at Stoke-upon-Trent in 1895; whilst at

Hackney in 1895 it was only 5 cwt. The task sanctioned for oakum-picking shows equal variations. Thus at West Bromwich in 1886, and at Stoke-upon-Trent in 1895, it was 2 lbs. per man; at West Bromwich it was in 1887 increased to 3 lbs., which was the amount sanctioned at Bradford since 1882, at Lewisham since 1888, and at Hackney in 1906. On the other hand, the task sanctioned at Huddersfield in 1888 was 4 lbs., which was that at Leeds in 1907, whilst at the Wolstanton and Burslem Labour Yard no less than 6 lbs. had to be picked in the day. During the winter of 1878-79, when pauperism in the Northern counties suddenly increased by 31 per cent, and Labour Yards were opened in all directions, it was noted that the daily tasks prescribed for the 7000 men at work (and approved, practically simultaneously, by the Local Government Board) varied from 5 to 28 cwt. of stone-breaking, and from 1 to 4 lbs. of oakum-picking.

It must, however, be added that, with the exception of a very few strictly superintended Labour Yards in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the variations between the different tasks exacted have always been more nominal than real. We can find no evidence that the Central Authority or the Board of Guardians ever ascertain whether the task so solemnly prescribed is actually performed. As a matter of fact, the amount of work done is usually trivial. It is in vain that Boards of Guardians insist, as did that of Poplar in 1868, that the task of work should be "at least as arduous as that required of a labourer in ordinary employment." It is in vain that the regulations specify, as do those of Edmonton Union, that each man is to break 10 cwt. of granite sufficiently small to pass through a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch grid or mesh; or to make up and tie 200 bundles of firewood; or to grind 120 lbs. of maize or 8 pecks of wheat or barley. The curious investigator into Labour Yards to-day, who insists on examining the Labour Master's private memoranda of the amount of work done by each man, invariably finds that nothing like the specified task is accomplished. Unfortunately the actual amount of stone broken, or of the other work done, is seldom officially reported or recorded. At Poplar in 1895 it was found that only

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1345 tons were broken in 13,428 days' labour; that is to say, not the 10 cwt. expected at Edmonton, but just over 2 cwt. per man per day. The average in the Wandsworth Labour Yard in 1896 had never exceeded from 2 cwt. to 3 cwt. per man per day. The only practicable remedy of the Guardians is to prosecute a man for refusing to work; but this extreme step is resorted to only in cases of flagrant disobedience or recalcitrance. Under these circumstances, no amount of supervision can ensure continuous work. "Recently," said the Superintendent of the Leeds Labour Yard, "I have had to attend to the stone-carts coming into the Yard, and some of the men . . . are ever ready to take advantage of my temporary absence. I have noticed that, when I am called away, nearly every man ceases work until my return, and time after time I have looked from the Test Yard door and seen them gossiping in groups of four or five, some smoking pipes or cigarettes, others sitting on the barrows; one acts as a 'crow' to warn the Yard when I return." The magistrates will not convict a man who docilely continues to raise his hammer whenever the Labour Master's eye is upon him, however slow and ineffective may be the stroke. The result is that the so-called test of work in the Labour Yard invariably fosters a habit of dull, lethargic loitering. It requires "no mental effort, and no sense of responsibility; it is a mechanical process." The men so employed "seem," said the Clerk to a Metropolitan Board of Guardians, "to suffer from overwhelming inertia."

Even in the hours of labour required, or perhaps we should say the hours of attendance, which have equally to be sanctioned by the Central Authority, we find a similar variation from Labour Yard to Labour Yard. It must, however, be said that the length of the prescribed working day is so small that the range of possible variations is less than in the case of the amount of task. We find Labour Yards requiring only five hours' attendance for a day's work, whilst a few exact as many as eight hours. The working week is usually only from thirty-six to forty-two hours, as compared with the sixty, seventy or even eighty hours of work per week required of the labourer in such

typical occupations as agriculture, transport by road and rail, and iron and steel works. And with the short hours of attendance goes a low rate of pay. But the scale of Outdoor Relief thus afforded varies as widely as the task or the hours. A single man without children may get as little as sevenpence (half in bread) in return for his day. Elsewhere, as at Poplar in 1895, he gets for his day four times that amount. For a man and wife the Bedwellty Board of Guardians, in the Labour Yard in which from 300 to 600 men worked during the whole winter of 1892-93, on the shutting down of the Tredegar Steel Works, allowed 1s. per day (half in kind), whilst at Poplar in 1870 a childless couple got only 5d. in money and 4 lbs. of bread. The corresponding amount allowed to a man with wife and three or four children varies from nine shillings to more than fourteen. On the other hand, at the Salford Labour Yard in February 1907, a man could get only 6s. per week for himself and wife, and 1s. for each child—making no more than 10s. per week for a family of six—and that only provided that he worked for the full thirty-eight and a half hours in the week, and actually accomplished the task of breaking 8 cwt. of stone per day, a proportionate deduction being made for any deficiency in the quantity broken. This arrangement comes very near to employment at piecework rates of wages, differing according to the size of the family.

It is a further element of variety that the men are sometimes allowed (and even required) to come regularly to the Labour Yard continuously day by day; whilst elsewhere they are only permitted to work (and to draw the relief) for three, or even for two, days in the week. At Poplar in 1895, where relatively high rates per day were allowed, each ticket was available only for two days, and 1939 separate men got, on an average, only seven days' work each in the Labour Yards in the whole six weeks that they were open. At Edmonton in 1904 the plan was adopted of allowing to every man in the Labour Yard the same daily amount of Outdoor Relief, viz. 2s. 6d. (three-fifths in kind), but permitting him to come to work, and to receive the relief, only two, three or four days a

week, according to the size of his family and to whether he was over or under sixty years of age. Presumably the assumption is that, on the days on which the man is excluded from the Labour Yard, he will be able to get casual employment elsewhere. We can find no attempt by the Central Authority to require, as recommended by Mr. Davy and Mr. Crewder, that men receiving Outdoor Relief should be kept continuously at work for a specified period of one week, or several weeks, and should thus be, for that period, entirely removed from the labour market. "In certain well-known cases," says Mr. Crowder, "men have been allowed to come in and out very much as they like, to get a day's work, then the next day come to the Labour Yard, then go out again, and so forth."

The Labour Yard is exclusively for men. Usually, as at Leeds at present, admission is restricted to married men, and sometimes married men with families, all Outdoor Relief being refused to single men—unless, say the Edmonton Board of Guardians, they are over sixty—and sometimes to married men without children, or even with one child. On the other hand, in the Sheffield Union no order for the Labour Yard is given to any but single men. Usually the order for the Labour Yard is regarded as a privilege which is refused (as at Manchester) to "men of improvident, drunken or immoral habits," or to "Able-bodied men with families residing in furnished lodgings"; or (as at Dudley) to "persons living in common lodging-houses," or who have not "resided in the Union for at least six months"; or (as at Edmonton) to those who cannot prove residence for a twelvemonth. The actual character of the men found in a Labour Yard varies considerably, according to the strictness of the regulations and to the state of trade. When the Labour Yard is open in the winter, it is resorted to (as at Leeds) by building trade labourers and others thrown out of employment by seasonal depression of trade. There is, however, a consensus of opinion that the men at work in a Labour Yard are, for the most part, of an undeserving class; to a large extent habitual dependents on the Labour Yard, recurring whenever it is open, sometimes (as at West Ham) for

as many as ten years in succession; and extending from father to son and even to grandson, often of the lowest or semi-criminal class. "Fifty per cent of the men admitted" to a Labour Yard, said one Clerk to a Board of Guardians, "are street corner men, who rarely ever work beyond doing odd jobs for a few coppers."

With the rise to power of the New School of Poor Law Orthodoxy between 1869 and 1886, there was a sustained, but apparently unsuccessful, effort on the part of the Inspectorate to check the extension of the Outdoor Labour Test. What seems most to have struck Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Longley was not so much that the conditions of the Labour Yards were so diverse, and that their influence was so demoralising, but the fact that the test of work failed, in many cases, to deter Able-bodied applicants from coming for relief. There was much less reluctance for the man to go to work in the Labour Yard than for the whole family to enter the Workhouse. A great many of the Unemployed applicants for relief were, in fact, in no way scared off by a test of work, even when that work was stone-breaking, and the reward only a certain number of pounds of bread, with ninepence or a shilling a day in money. There were, in fact, men who found no better alternative for years at a stretch. It was found that men resorted to the Labour Yard every winter; and even, if it was open throughout the year, worked there continuously, as if the Board of Guardians were a capitalist employer. We are told in 1871 that "some men now in the Labour Yard have been working there for five years, and in some cases have not been absent for an entire week during the whole of that period." At St. Pancras it has been found that "there were men willing enough to work in the Labour Yard for the merest existence, rather than to take the trouble and responsibility of looking after themselves, and finding a home and the rest of it." The Superintendent of the Leeds Labour Yard reports that "these men would be on test labour the whole year round if allowed to do so." What is even more invariable is the recurrence to the Labour Yard at each successive period of Unemployment or Under-

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employment. "It is," said Mr. Davy in 1888, "an inseparable accident of the system of Labour Yards that it attracts a certain number of men back to them; for my experience is that a certain proportion of mankind would rather have an assured subsistence, though it is a very small one, than have to work in the open market for their living. . . . My experience is that those men will come back to any particular town when Outdoor Relief is given in the form of a Labour Test; and that has a tendency to make the Labour Yard chronic instead of exceptional, and a sort of caste of men out of employment is created. I have seen it frequently. I have known men stay fourteen or fifteen years working for a bare subsistence in a Labour Yard when they ought to have gone away and earned their living."

In spite of this condemnation, the Labour Yard remains the only official remedy under the Poor Law for periods of exceptional distress. As a matter of fact, a repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 would leave the Labour Yard in all the great centres of population as the only practicable provision for the thousands of men rendered destitute by the winter's frost or by stagnation of trade. The question is whether the objections to it can be overcome, as Mr. Davy and Mr. Crowder suggest, by strict supervision and continuous employment.

To us it seems clearly proved, by more than half a century of experience, that no such system as the Labour Yard—however wisely devised, or however well administered—can possibly be made a satisfactory treatment of Able-bodied Destitution. Any system of Outdoor Relief to able-bodied men against a test of work inevitably lands the administrator in insoluble dilemmas. There is first the initial dilemma that the work must either be really wanted and genuinely productive, in which case its performance in the Labour Yard instead of in the open market at wages seems to be positively creating Unemployment and Pauperism; or else it is useless and unproductive, and thus an expensive and repellent sham. But apart from this fundamental dilemma of all relief works, there is the special difficulty of fixing the task. If

no task is specified, or if the nature of the work is such that it cannot accurately be measured otherwise than by time, the nominal day's labour becomes, however diligent the supervision, a mere pretence, demoralising to the character of the men thus taught to loaf and loiter. If the honest man at first finds himself doing more work than the habitual pauper, he rapidly learns to adjust himself to his deteriorating surroundings. If a definite task has to be prescribed, it makes inadmissible most kinds of work, owing to the impossibility of accurately measuring the individual effort, and confines the choice to coarse, mechanical drudgery, not unsuited to the unskilled labourer, but apt to impair the dexterity of the skilled mechanic. When the amount of the task has to be quantitatively fixed, it becomes quite impossible to adjust it to fit the varying strength and dexterity of the men. What to the strong man,—still more to the habitual attendant at a Labour Yard—is mere child's play, may be cruel torture to the delicate, half-starved clerk or weaver who undertakes it for the first time. Hence the invariable practice, whatever the nominal task, of getting out of each man just whatever proportion of it the vigilance and persuasion of the Labour Master can exact. This inevitably means, in practice, as we have seen, the ignoring of any specific task, and a perpetual struggle between the loafers and the Labour Master, in which the latter, having no power of dismissal, is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, completely worsted.

Another series of dilemmas confronts the administrator with regard to the hours of labour and to continuity of employment. If, in order to make the lot of the pauper in the Labour Yard less eligible than that of the independent labourer, the hours of work in the Labour Yard are fixed, at sixty or seventy per week, and the man is required to attend regularly day by day, he has practically no chance of ever securing private employment. If, on the other hand, the Labour Yard is not opened until 9 A.M. or 10 A.M., or the hours of attendance are otherwise shortened, in order to permit the men to look for work, it is impossible to prevent the man who does not want work from idling

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away the time; and the short working day of the Labour Yard becomes a distinct attraction. If, in order to make the men seek work, they are only allowed to work in the Labour Yard for two or three days at a time, or if they are permitted to absent themselves for one or two days and then resume attendance, encouragement and facilities are being afforded to the most demoralising form of casual labour and Under-employment, without any prospect of improvement. But if, as Mr. Crowder advises, any men getting relief in a Labour Yard were required to remain there for several weeks, they would during that period presumably miss many chances of employment, and acquire the habit of working at the Labour Yard, as at a specially demoralising form of "relief works" for the Unemployed.

Nor is it easier to fix the rate of Outdoor Relief, or payment to be given for the work done. It is a fundamental condition of the Outdoor Labour Test that what should be given must be relief, not wages, and must, therefore, be what is required, and no more than is required, for bare subsistence. This necessarily varies, not according to the work done, but according to the needs of the family group represented by the worker. Thus a strong, energetic and conscientious single man receives less than the weakest, slackest and most dishonourable man who happens to have a wife and children dependent on him. No amount of good conduct or diligence in labour produces any reward. On the other hand, as there is no possibility of dismissal, no amount of idleness or misconduct—short of a positive refusal to work at all, for which a man may be criminally prosecuted—entails any punishment. And the conditions of employment in a strictly regulated Labour Yard are necessarily so unpleasant that a short sojourn in the modern County Gaol, with its short hours of work, its warm and comfortable quarters, and food at least as good as that of the pauper, offers no terrors to the habitual inmate of a Labour Yard. Hence, for the worker in the Labour Yard, there is neither hope nor fear. For him, whatever his past character or present conduct, there is, in the strictly administered Labour Yard,

nothing but a dead level of repellent work at hardly a bare subsistence.

The administrator of the Labour Yard, so far as the amount of relief, or payment, is concerned, is once more between the horns of a dilemma. If anything resembling the customary rate of pay of the unskilled labourer is allowed for the work done, the certainty of the employment and the inevitable slackness of the work—if not also the shortness of the working day—make the Labour Yard, far from being deterrent, highly advantageous and positively attractive to the whole army of casual labourers, who promptly present themselves in large and rapidly increasing numbers. If, on the other hand, the scale is fixed distinctly below the ordinary unskilled labourer's earnings, it is physiologically insufficient for the support of the man and his family; with the result that, whilst the idle rogues who can find other means of subsistence take themselves off, the really destitute man, who is there because he cannot possibly get work or wages elsewhere, finds himself forced to remain under semi-starvation, and, therefore, actual physical and mental deterioration for himself and his family. This indeed is the universal paradox relating to every aspect of the so-called Outdoor Labour Test. Where the conditions are lenient or lax, the work relatively easy and the scale of relief liberal, an analysis of the men at work in the Labour Yard reveals a large percentage of habitual loafers and men of the most irregular habits, who could otherwise maintain themselves if they chose, but whom the somnolent inertia of the Labour Yard attracts in preference. When the conditions are at their strictest, the work most repellent, prolonged and severe, and the scale of relief at its lowest, these men take themselves off, and the Labour Yard will be resorted to exclusively by men whom physical defects or evil fortune have brought so low that they have really no alternative—men who cannot possibly support themselves and their families by any other means, and who therefore are honestly entitled to humane and certainly not deteriorating relief. Meanwhile, so evil is the reputation of the Labour Yard, with its useless and painful task, with

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its sullen shirking of work, with its total absence of either hope or fear, that, in times of great distress, when honest, self-respecting artisans or operatives and their families are really perishing from continued inanition, we are told that men "would rather starve" than enter the Labour Yard. In short, whether as regards those whom it includes or those whom it excludes from relief, the Outdoor Labour Test, in the forms in which it is almost universally practised, appears to us, regarded as a deliberate mode of treatment of Able-bodied Destitution, as a hopeless failure.

What is even more serious is that, far from doing anything to prevent or diminish Able-bodied Destitution, the very existence of the Outdoor Labour Test in any town positively facilitates and encourages the worst kind of Under-employment, namely, the unorganised, intermittent casual jobs of the unskilled labourer. The very limitation of the "Order for the Labour Yard" to two days at a time; or the closing of the Labour Yard on the one or two days in the week when casual employment is supposed to be most frequent; the granting of admission to the Labour Yard only for a week at a time, and encouraging men to go off for work whenever they can—even the opening of a Labour Yard only for a few weeks in the dull season—defeats the object of the Outdoor Labour Test of keeping the paupers in any real sense off the labour market, and positively helps to make it possible for employers to avoid maintaining a regular staff, and for men to feel free to throw up their jobs after a day or two. "In one Liverpool Union," it was said in 1888, "if a man finds work at the dock, he works there and gets his wage; if he does not, he goes straight to the Relieving Officer and gets an order for the Stone Yard, and works there." "I asked," continues the Inspector, "an applicant for relief how he got his living during the summer, to which he replied that he worked for Mr. —, naming a farmer in the neighbourhood. I then inquired how he lived during the winter, to which he answered, 'I work for the Guardians here in Gravesend.'" Of the men in the Leeds Labour Yard, the Superintendent reports, in 1907, that some "do a little haymaking or potato picking during the

season, others follow race meetings or act as 'crow' for a street book-maker in some low-class district, or odd jobs here and there occasionally. They have no desire for regular employment." "You may take it," said an experienced Inspector in 1907, that "it is not an uncommon thing at all for a man to be in receipt of relief (in a Labour Yard) . . . for a certain period, and then go off relief, be employed, and then be relieved again." "If," said Mr. Crowder of the Outdoor Labour Test generally, "you let men come on, as they have been accustomed to do at Labour Yards, for one day, or even half a day, and then not apply the next morning, but get a job outside; and then come back again . . . *that is ruination.*" It is, in fact, at last realised that the device which the Poor Law Commissioners and the Poor Law Board had so persistently pressed on Boards of Guardians, and which the Local Government Board still maintains in force—especially when it is worked, as it usually is, in such a way as actually to encourage men to go off under pretext of looking for private employment—is, in itself, a bad example of Under-employment and Under-payment, viciously dovetailing into and thereby upholding private systems of Under-employment and Under-payment, and thus actually tending to foster and increase the Able-bodied Destitution which it purports to relieve.

(c) *The General Mixed Workhouse as an Asylum for Able-bodied Men*

The constantly repeated argument against Outdoor Relief and the failure of the Outdoor Labour Test have induced many Boards of Guardians to fall back simply on the "offer of the House" to Able-bodied male applicants for relief. It is one of the most disquieting features of the last few years that this "offer of the House" is being increasingly accepted, sometimes sullenly, by respectable men unable to find any alternative, but, more frequently, with cynical alacrity, by a certain type of "work-shy" or "Unemployable," who finds the gamble of picking up a living without persistent toil going against him. We do

not need to repeat the emphatic condemnation by Mr. Corbett and Mr. Longley of the use of the General Mixed Workhouse of 1869-75. It is even more justified with regard to the gigantic, and sometimes palatial establishments which are the pride of the Destitution Authorities of to-day, not only in the Metropolis, but also in many a large town. The testimony given to us on this point is conclusive. "Every workhouse . . . visited," reported our Special Investigator, "contained a number of men in every way as well developed physically as the average of the general population." "The association in large numbers in the Able-bodied blocks becomes," we are told, positively "an attraction," so that literally hundreds of men are content to take up their residence permanently in the Workhouse. "The fact that there are men in the Gordon Road Workhouse to-day," reported the Master in 1908 to the Camberwell Board of Guardians, "that were here five, ten, fifteen, and I think I may safely say twenty years ago, and have been chargeable more or less ever since, and many are . . . still Able-bodied, is in itself sufficient evidence that there is something lacking in the administration." In short, said the representative of a Metropolitan Board of Guardians, "having got a man into the Workhouse, we have no sufficient test to prevent him stopping there." It is only since 1891-2 that the statistics of the Local Government Board for England and Wales inform us how many Able-bodied men in health were in the Workhouses; but the rise in these sixteen years from 6070 in 1891-2 to 9164 in 1907-8 is full of significance. So far as we can make out, *there are, this winter, heaped up in the General Mixed Workhouses of England and Wales, certainly more than 10,000 men, classed as healthy and Able-bodied.* In London alone the number must amount to something like 5000—a phenomenon quite new and unprecedented, we believe, during at least half a century. The 'Poor Law Officers' Association pressed this evil on our notice. "If," said their representative, "you get a bulk of able-bodied people into your House, the whole tone of your House ultimately must deteriorate. . . . The effect of Indoor Relief, as it stands

to-day, on the able-bodied class, in my estimation, undoubtedly is that it deteriorates. . . . We are not staffed, and we have not the appliances to deal with a large body of Able-bodied, and that is why we have urged so strongly, all the way through this evidence, that the Able-bodied should be removed from us, primarily for their own sake and also for the sakes of the other inmates."

The regimen of the General Mixed Workhouse, including as it does, under one roof, and under one Master, the infants, the sick, the infirm and the aged, cannot be made suitable for hundreds of healthy able-bodied men.

"It is impossible," said Mr. Lockwood, so long Inspector for the Metropolitan District, "to prevent the able-bodied class sharing in the comfort, and, I may say, the luxuries, of the older ones. The Dietary Order provides the old people with a better class of diet, and so on, and the able-bodied should be on a restricted diet; there should be nothing attractive about it, and the conditions of the life in the Workhouse should be distinct for them, and such as to provide an incentive to them to earn their living outside. I say you cannot prevent that class finding the condition of life in a Mixed Workhouse such as, as a matter of fact, they are not entitled to, and which they ought not to share in."

The Local Government Board has always attached "much importance to uniformity in the matter of the hours to be observed by inmates of Workhouses, for getting up, meals, work, etc." Hence, even for the healthy male adults; from ten to eleven hours out of the twenty-four are, according to the terms of the General Consolidated Order, which has remained unrevised since 1847, allowed for sleep, or at least for untrammelled intercourse in the large dormitories. Conversation in the dormitories is nominally forbidden, but, as it has been authoritatively stated, "it is utterly impossible with such a staff as the Master of a Workhouse has, to avoid a large amount of conversation going on. It need not be loud to be very general and very productive of evil; because classification, however you may attempt it, cannot be successfully carried on as long as you have the large dormitory system." The hours of work, which must have in each case the express approval of the Local Government Board, are usually fixed

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at no more than forty-seven to fifty per week, which is to be compared with the sixty, seventy or even eighty hours per week frequently exacted from the general labourer, porter, horsekeeper or carman. As a matter of fact, in the Workhouse, "most of the men are finished their day's work by about two o'clock; from two to half-past." After this they can spend their time together as they please, in the yard or in the day-room, with games and gossip. They regard the General Mixed Workhouse, as one Master declared, "as a kind of club-house in which they put up with a certain amount of inconvenience, but have very pleasant evenings." There is even, it appears, the possibility of pleasant excursions.

"On March 6th, 1906, three able-bodied male inmates were captured by the police whilst netting rabbits in Windsor Park. These men left the Workhouse after the officers had gone to bed, and it was their intention, after disposing of the result of their labours, to return to the Workhouse before the officers were up."

During the long hours of Sunday there is, of course, no work; and in many Workhouses of the large towns all attempt to compel men to attend the religious service has, from a respect for freedom of conscience, been given up. The majority of the men simply "idle" the day away in gossip. The result, we need hardly say, is deplorable. Of all the spectacles of human demoralisation now existing in these islands, there can scarcely be anything worse than the scene presented by the men's day ward of a large Urban Workhouse during the long hours of leisure on week-days, or the whole of the Sundays. Through the clouds of tobacco smoke that fill the long low room, the visitor gradually becomes aware of the presence of one or two hundred wholly unoccupied males of every age between fifteen and ninety—strong and vicious men; men in all stages of recovery from debauch; weedy youths of weak intellect; old men too dirty or disreputable to be given special privileges, and sometimes, when there are no such privileges, even worthy old men; men subject to fits; occasional monstrosities or dwarfs; the feeble-minded of every kind; the respectable labourer prematurely invalided; the hardened, sodden

loafer, and the temporarily unemployed man who has found no better refuge. These agglomerations are sometimes of huge size. In one Workhouse in England and in another in Ireland, we found actually several hundreds of such men, of all ages between fifteen and ninety, herded together day and night, in a series of communicating yards and sheds and common dormitories, all free to associate with each other, and to communicate to each other, in long hours of idleness, all the contents of their minds. *In such places, as we have said, there are aggregated, this winter, certainly more than 10,000 healthy able-bodied men.*

It is a special evil that these Able-bodied inmates of the General Mixed Workhouse contribute a large proportion to the demoralising class of "In-and-Outs."

"In one (Workhouse) which I have in mind," observes Mr. Lockwood, "the ordinary admissions and discharges average 450 per week, or 23,400 per annum. Every individual admitted goes through a course entailing the removal, cleansing, and storing of his own clothes, and any small possessions he may have about him. He is then bathed, and a Workhouse suit provided him. Every inmate taking his discharge goes through the same process reversed, with the exception of the bath. In the large Workhouse referred to, there is a leave day every week for men and women alternately. The average weekly number of men allowed out is 360, of women, 280. Not a few of both sexes return in a condition indicating that they have had more to drink than was altogether good for them. The scrutiny, however, is not very inquisitorial; in fact, the passing-in is largely a question of gait and temper. If the individual is not noisy, quarrelsome, or abusive, he is allowed to proceed to his particular ward, and so, in due course, to bed. Bad cases are reported to the Guardians, and, as a punishment, the leave stopped for a time."

"At the Bath Workhouse," says another Inspector, "during the past twelve months, out of 286 paupers, 82 have been in and out from ten to seventy-four times. Of these, 24 generally return the worse for drink. Many go out for begging purposes, bringing back with them tea, sugar, tobacco, matches, pipes, etc. The most troublesome in this way, I am informed, are Able-bodied men and immoral women." "I am unable," said an Inspector of the Local Government Board of England and Wales, "to

avoid regarding it as somewhat of a reflection on this Board, and the Guardians of London, that hitherto this troublesome class has been dealt with in this shiftless, inadequate manner, and that no well thought-out scheme has been adopted in its place."

As a remedy for these disastrous effects of the General Mixed Workhouse as an Asylum for the Able-bodied we find the leading members of the Inspectorate of the Local Government Board for England and Wales, from 1871 right down to the present day, continuously advocating, as the "orthodox" Poor Law Policy, the elimination of the Able-bodied from the General Mixed Workhouse, and the establishment, in every populous Union, or for every group of Unions, of (to use Mr. Lockwood's own words to us) a "properly equipped *separate* Workhouse specially designed to deal with the class of persons who otherwise might be found in the Labour Yards," where such were opened, or in the Able-bodied Wards of the General Mixed Workhouse. This Able-bodied Test Workhouse has, in the course of the last thirty years, been tried in various Unions. No general description of these experiments and no report of their results appear ever to have been made. Nor did it come within the scope of any of the Investigators whom we appointed. Notwithstanding this absence of information, we found the project of an Able-bodied Test Workhouse, as the only really successful method of dealing with the Able-bodied applicant for relief, strongly pressed upon us. One of our members thought it desirable, therefore, to investigate the records of the Poplar, Kensington, Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield Unions, where the project has been tried, and we have, one or other of us, personally visited all the places in which the experiment is, with more or less modification, still being continued.

(D) *The Able-bodied Test Workhouse*

(i.) *Poplar*

The first experiment of an Able-bodied Test Workhouse was tried in 1871 by the Poplar Board of Guardians, at

that time apparently the strictest Poor Law administrators in the Metropolis. At the instance of the Local Government Board Inspectors, and with the cordial approval of the Local Government Board itself, arrangements were made in combination with the Stepney Union under which the sick were placed in a separate Infirmary, the children in a separate Poor Law school, and all the aged and infirm in the Stepney Workhouse at Bromley; leaving the Poplar Workhouse to "be used for the receipt of such poor persons only as are Able-bodied." Here, at last, was the series of distinct institutions, and the complete segregation of the Able-bodied in a Workhouse by themselves, which had been advocated in the 1834 Report. Presently the arrangement was extended so as to enable other Metropolitan Unions to send their Able-bodied paupers to the Poplar Workhouse, which thus became the specialised Able-bodied institution for nearly the whole of London.

Here the regimen was of the sternest. "It was," said Mr. Corbett, the Local Government Board Inspector, "essentially a House of Industry." "The women," reported a St. Pancras Relieving Officer to his Board, "were all put to work at oakum-picking. The task was very severe, and they were all compelled to perform the task of work allotted to each daily, or in default taken before the magistrate the following day. . . . Several had been sent to prison by the Poplar Guardians." The severity of the task may be seen from the fact that the amount of oakum to be picked in the day was, for men, no less than 10 lbs. of beaten or 5 lbs. of unbeaten, and for women, 6 lbs. of beaten or 3 lbs. of unbeaten; whilst the amount of granite to be broken was, at the Master's discretion, at first, five to seven bushels, and latterly, seven to ten bushels. Accordingly, Poplar quickly became a word of terror to the Metropolitan pauper. The unfortunate man or woman, whom the Relieving Officer at the other end of London deemed to be Able-bodied, was, in many cases, refused even admission to the local Workhouse, and given merely "an Order for Poplar," to which place of rigour, sometimes miles away, he or she, whatever the hour or the weather, was directed to walk. That this procedure was effective in staying off

relief became quickly evident; and the Local Government Board was delighted. "The appropriation of one Workhouse," it reported, "solely to the relief of Able-bodied paupers, where they are placed under strict management and discipline, and set to suitable tasks of work of various kinds, has enabled the Workhouse Test to be systematically applied, not only in the Poplar Union, but in all the Unions which have contracted for the reception of Able-bodied paupers into that Workhouse; and the result appears to have been satisfactory. The Guardians . . . have been enabled, instead of orders for the Labour Yards, to give to the Able-bodied applicants for relief, orders of admission to the Poplar Workhouse; and, notwithstanding the considerable number of Unions which have availed themselves of this privilege, the number . . . who have accepted the relief, or having accepted it, have remained in the Workhouse, has been so small that, although the Workhouse will contain 788 persons, there were in it, at the close of last year, only 166 inmates. Great credit appears to be due to the Guardians of the Poplar Union for the firm and judicious manner in which they have conducted this, the first experiment of the kind; and we shall watch the progress of this endeavour to apply the Workhouse Test to the Able-bodied poor of the Metropolis with great care and interest." For the next few years we see thousands of "Orders for Poplar" given by the twenty-five Unions in the combination; and from six to thirty persons nightly made the long tramp, presented themselves, and were duly admitted. That even these few, who presumably could think of no other means of subsistence, found Poplar unendurable, is shown by the statistics. Though the total number present at any one time seldom exceeded 200, more than that number were often received and discharged each week. The total number of admissions during 1877 was 3745, but the number present at any one time did not exceed 200, so that the average stay of them all was under three weeks; most of them, indeed, as the Local Government Board triumphantly remarked, "have almost immediately taken their discharge."

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It is, however, to be noted that even the rigours of Poplar did nothing to prevent recurrence of cases, or what is known as "ins-and-outs." We have taken the trouble to analyse all the admissions for the years 1877 and 1880, with the result of finding that, in each of these years, no fewer than one-third of the persons admitted had been previously admitted—many cases repeatedly, 145 over five times, and some even thirty or forty times, within a single year. It is clear, in fact, that, much as Poplar was disliked, a large proportion of those who came to it could not possibly find any way of living outside, and, when they tried, were quickly driven in again.

The inmates, however, do not appear to have given the Master an easy time. From an analysis of the punishment book for nine years it appears that, every three weeks or so, one or more of the inmates would be charged before the Police Magistrate and sentenced to from seven days to twelve months' imprisonment, whilst practically every other day some one was punished by solitary confinement in the "Refractory Ward," or by restriction of diet, a fate which few seem altogether to have escaped, as the numbers so treated during the year exceed, between 1877 and 1880, the average number of inmates. These frequent prosecutions of merely destitute, unconvicted persons, for resistance to penal tasks, at length attracted the attention of the Police Magistrate. In 1877 he refused to convict a man who had rebelled against his task of stone-breaking, because, although the Poor Law Medical Officer had certified him to be Able-bodied, the Magistrate, on the advice of the Police Medical Officer, was not satisfied that he was fit for such work. In the following year the Magistrate discharged a woman who had refused to perform her task of picking oakum, and stated publicly as his reason that "it was not fit work for women." In 1879 a woman who had three times refused to do her oakum-picking was brought up for punishment, but the Magistrate refused to convict, "and the consequence of her being discharged," notes the Master, "is that it has a very bad effect on the other inmates, as she

persuades them not to work either." In this dilemma the Master apparently falls back on his own arbitrary powers of confining the paupers in the Refractory Ward on bread and water only, for we see that the numbers so punished rose from 44 in 1875, and 105 in 1876, to 244 in 1877, and to an average of nearly 200 per annum for the four years, 1877-1880.

Meanwhile, the Poplar Board of Guardians appeals for help to the Local Government Board. "The Master of the Workhouse," it is plaintively remarked, "has a very considerable amount of trouble in getting any work done now by the inmates; and when Mr. Saunders' [the Police Magistrate's] sentiments become known, the Guardians think that the trouble and difficulty will be much increased. If oakum-picking is not to form a part of the task work, the Guardians are at a loss to know what substitute to provide for it without interfering with the labour market." But the Local Government Board had no help to give. The Poplar Guardians were informed in reply that the Board fully recognised the difficulty in which the Guardians would be placed if the Magistrates "refrain from assisting the Guardians in their efforts to deal with that particular class for whom the Poplar Workhouse is specially set apart, viz., the Able-bodied Paupers of a large number of Metropolitan Unions, who, as a rule, can only be managed by the exercise of strict discipline, and by being kept employed. The Board cannot but suppose that when Mr. Saunders becomes fully acquainted with the obligations imposed upon the Guardians, and the necessity and difficulty of finding work for the Able-bodied inmates of the Workhouse, he will be prepared to deal with future cases in such a manner as will enable the Guardians to maintain the requisite discipline in that establishment."

The difficulties of the Poplar Board of Guardians were increased by the fact that the Metropolitan Unions found the offer of an "Order for Poplar" so efficacious in staving off applications for relief that they often adopted this device for "testing," as they called it, any pauper whom they wished to get rid of. To these "mixed" authorities there presented themselves not the Able-bodied only, but

also the Aged and the physically defective. Many of these, if offered nothing but an "Order for Poplar," might get supported by their relations or by charity. Accordingly we see these Orders given to all to whom the Guardians deemed it desirable (to use the phrase of the Hampstead Board) "to apply the test of destitution," even to men and women of advanced age, some of whom had no alternative but acceptance. Already in 1873 we find the Medical Officer complaining of the numbers who were found to be not able-bodied. In 1880, out of 1284 separate men admitted to this so-called Able-bodied Test Workhouse, no fewer than 235 were over sixty years of age; and even of the 810 separate women, 73 were over sixty. The practice of sending physically defective persons was so frequent that the Poplar Board of Guardians had to insist, in 1876, upon receiving a definite medical certificate along with each case.

These various difficulties and inconveniences failed in any way to shake the confidence of the Local Government Board and its zealous Inspectorate in the Able-bodied Test Workhouse. Down to the last, the Poplar Workhouse had their approval, and was upheld as a model. What brought it to an end was—significantly enough—the fact that it was not administered by an authority dealing only with the Able-bodied, but by one having to accommodate all classes of paupers. Gradually the numbers of the sick and infirm to be provided for in Poplar forced the Guardians to the alternative of either building new institutions, or utilising the partly vacant space at the Poplar Workhouse. They naturally chose the latter course. In 1881 the Local Government Board note that it may be necessary, owing to "the need of accommodation of other classes," to let in other than the able-bodied. In February, 1882, the Poplar Guardians insist that, as the wards for the old and infirm are full to overflowing, with every sign of increasing numbers, they should not enter into fresh agreements with other Unions. Upon this, the Local Government Board reluctantly agreed that, having regard to the increased number of indoor poor to be accommodated, the Poplar Workhouse must cease to receive able-

bodied paupers from other Unions; whereupon it reverted once more to being a General Mixed Workhouse of the ordinary type.

(ii.) *Kensington*

The Local Government Board were not daunted by the failure of the Poplar Board of Guardians to persist in the maintenance of an institution exclusively devoted to the Able-bodied. The Metropolitan Inspectors could do nothing better than look for a Board of Guardians willing to take up the task that Poplar had abandoned. It happened that, at the moment, the Kensington Union had vacant, at Mary Place, at a conveniently great distance from its General Mixed Workhouse, a building erected for the accommodation of Vagrants and Men on Outdoor Labour Test, but now disused. The Kensington Guardians proposed to fill it with their aged and infirm. To this the Local Government Board demurred, suggesting as an alternative that "the building might prove a valuable substitute for the Workhouse of Poplar Union, which is no longer available in respect of paupers belonging to other Unions." Under the influence of the Inspector, the Kensington Board of Guardians agreed to adopt this suggestion with regard to men only. In making choice, as a successor to the Poplar Board of Guardians, of that of Kensington, the Local Government Board were doubtless influenced by the reputation of the latter for the quality of the members of the Board, and for the integrity and capacity of its officials.

For twenty-two years this model Board of Guardians maintained the Able-bodied Test Workhouse for the Metropolis—a thoroughly well-regulated, clean establishment, where able-bodied men, on very plain fare, were kept to stone-breaking, corn-grinding and oakum-picking for fifty-five or sixty hours per week. It was, at first, proposed that they should work sixty-six hours per week, the projected task being, during the summer half-year, to break 11 cwt. of granite, or to work at corn-grinding from 6 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., and, during the winter six

months, to break 7 cwt. of granite between 7.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m., and pick 1 lb. of unbeaten oakum between 5 and 7 p.m. or work at corn-grinding from 7.30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thus, when it was too dark for stone-breaking, the men were not to be allowed leisure, but were to be put on to oakum-picking or corn-grinding to make out the full time. To this, however, the Local Government Board demurred, observing that the hours of labour prescribed in the General Consolidated Order for 1847 were sufficiently long. In reply the Guardians quite naturally retorted that "the General Consolidated Order of 1847 was framed for Workhouses in which all classes of inmates were concerned, and doubtless prescribed sufficiently long hours for the women, boys and girls, to whom it applied equally with the men. In a Workhouse in which only able-bodied paupers are maintained the Guardians bear in mind that the position of the able-bodied male pauper should not be made more eligible than that of the independent labourer." The Local Government Board then sanctioned sixty hours per week for work. Long hours of penal toil were, however, not the only deterrent applied to the inmates of the Mary Place Able-bodied Workhouse. The only period of leisure, that between the last meal and bedtime, was found to be so mis-spent, "in almost entire idleness," that a committee recommended that the men be sent to bed at 8 p.m., summer and winter. A more ingenious device was, however, found, namely, that of occupying this only hour of leisure by the "lectures" of a "Mental Instructor," at which attendance was obligatory; whilst any smoking on the premises by any inmate whatsoever was sternly prohibited. No inmate was ever allowed to go out, even on Sunday. The diet was as coarse and monotonous as could be devised, and there was even an absence of anything beyond the necessary warmth. An application from the forty unhappy inmates in December, 1884, for more food and for more firing in the day-room, coupled with a complaint of the severity of the task of work, was sternly refused. In short, the Kensington Guardians deliberately set themselves to carry out the recommendations of the 1834 Report: to maintain, that is to say, a distinct

institution for the Able-bodied; to have it for men only; and thus to be free to make the conditions really less eligible than those of the lowest class of independent labourers.

There can be no doubt as to the effect of this experiment in practically abolishing Able-bodied Male Pauperism, alike in Kensington itself, and in the other Unions so far as they chose to avail themselves of their power of issuing orders of admission to the Mary Place Workhouse. "I have recently had a personal conversation," reported the Clerk to the Kensington Board of Guardians, in 1884, "with two of the Workhouse Masters, who were emphatically of opinion that the power to send their able-bodied men to a Test Workhouse had been of immense advantage; both were of opinion that not more than 20 per cent of those to whom orders were given found their way to Mary Place Workhouse; and as those who returned again received an order for that Workhouse, the result was that the Parish got rid of the man. One of these Masters informed me that whereas last year there were over a hundred able-bodied men in his Workhouse, there were at the corresponding time this year only forty; and these were men who for different reasons could not be certified as able-bodied within the requirements laid down for Mary Place Workhouse. The working of the previous year had shown the Able-bodied loafer what he has to expect in Kensington, and that therefore, practically only those able-bodied men now apply to this parish for relief who are absolutely destitute." In spite of the many thousands of orders of admission that were issued, the numbers of men actually admitted seldom averaged more than five or six per day. Out of the aggregate of between one and three thousand admitted during the year, hardly any stayed more than a few days, so that the total accommodation of ninety was never exceeded; and the usual number of inmates was only a few dozen. "In our experience," writes the Clerk to the Kensington Board of Guardians in 1887, "of the men who are sent off from the other Parishes with orders for Mary Place . . . not 50 per cent present themselves for admission, and very few remain more than two or three days."

In this admirably conducted and—within its inherent limitations—entirely successful experiment, the Kensington Guardians were brought face to face with all the dilemmas of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, dilemmas which become all the more significant when we find them perplexing so excellent a Board of Guardians, served by such competent officials. There was, for instance, the usual difficulty, in the absence of any graduation of conditions, of making the men perform the nominal task. In 1889, for instance, “the Master presented a Return from which it appeared that scarcely any of the class of men certified for oakum-picking had performed anything approaching his full task, and he further reported that, in his opinion, there was a combination amongst this class against their work. He submitted the Punishment Book from which it appeared that a number of men had been punished for neglecting and refusing to perform their work.” It was in vain that he multiplied the punishments, and prosecuted the worst offenders before the Police Magistrate. The sullen inertia of the men who had no hope, and who found the well-warmed cells and easy toil of a short spell of gaol almost a relief, could not be overcome. If this was true of the hours of toil, it was still more apparent in the time to be devoted to mental improvement. As we were informed by the Master, the men during this hour either went to sleep or interrupted in such a way as to cause trouble. Ultimately the experiment of a Mental Instructor had to be abandoned.

Another difficulty was the impossibility of getting the Relieving Officers of the other Unions to confine their Orders for Mary Place to men who were physically fit for stone-breaking or for corn-grinding. As we have seen at Poplar, it was too tempting to “test” men of doubtful character by offering them what it was believed they would not accept, to make the other Unions sufficiently careful about the physical condition of the men they sent. Already in 1883 the other Parishes and Unions had to be expressly told to send no men who were ruptured, or who had any hidden ailment which they could plead in defence if they were prosecuted for not performing their task. So difficult

was it to prevent such men being sent, in order merely to "test their destitution," that the Kensington Guardians, in 1903, had to discharge no fewer than 192 men as wholly unfit for any of the tasks of an Able-bodied Test Workhouse. So frequent did this become, and so much did it interfere with the discipline of the establishment, that the Kensington Guardians were driven to appoint a special Medical Officer for the few dozen inmates of the Mary Place Workhouse, whose duty it was to attend daily and thoroughly examine every one of the men admitted, deciding whether each was fit for stone-breaking or for corn-grinding or for neither. After various remonstrances the Kensington Guardians found themselves driven to refuse from other Unions or Parishes all persons who were physically unfit for anything but the lighter work; and eventually to refuse all who were not actually fit for stone-breaking. This attained the end of restricting admission to the sturdy rogues of other Parishes, because, when the other Unions found it impossible to use the offer of an order for Mary Place as a means for "testing" every ordinarily Able-bodied man, they tended to use it chiefly to rid themselves of such of the known habitual paupers as were physically fit. Thus, though the Mary Place Workhouse maintained its deterrent character, it ceased, in practice, to be used by other Unions, except (as the Bermondsey Guardians frankly said) as a "useful method of dealing with refractory and worthless paupers, and such as, preferring to throw themselves on the rates, refuse to earn their own livelihood." This is expressly given by Mr. Lockwood as the cause of the failure of the Mary Place Test House. "It failed in its object," he told us, "because . . . in a large number of the cases that the Guardians wished to send there the Medical Officer would not certify the men to be physically fit for the task of work imposed."

The specialisation of the Mary Place Workhouse as an establishment of the refractory and worthless paupers of nearly the whole Metropolis left the Kensington Guardians between the horns of a dilemma. Either they had to give up using the Mary Place Workhouse as a test of

destitution of the respectable able-bodied men of their own Parish, who had committed no other crime than inability to find employment, or they had to subject such of this class as demonstrated their genuine destitution by passing the test to hard penal labour, under extremely rigorous and depressing conditions, in association with the scum of all the other Parishes and Unions. Already in 1882 the Kensington Guardians were prepared to "recognise the fact that among the able-bodied men who seek Poor Law relief, many have become destitute through misfortune, etc., . . . and for such class the Guardians hope shortly to be able to provide work, such as mat-making, carpentering, etc., of a more suitable character than stone-breaking, corn-grinding, or oakum-picking." What was even more objectionable from the stand-point of the Kensington resident was the concentration in the neighbourhood of the worst types of "Ins-and-Outs." For the Mary Place Workhouse exhibited once more the characteristic paradox of the Workhouse Test. The worse the conditions were made, the more "recurrent" became the applicants for admission. The "work-shy," the mentally defective and the sturdy rogues, who tramped to Mary Place from all parts of London bearing the necessary Order of admission, quickly took their discharge, and drifted into the common lodging-houses of the immediate neighbourhood for as long as they could support themselves by mendicancy and odd jobs. Becoming again destitute, they applied for relief from Kensington addresses and were sent once more to the Mary Place Workhouse, whilst their settlements were being inquired into; often beginning again the same round of In-and-Out before the case could be settled. Hence there was a steady pressure on the Guardians from the local residents, who objected to attracting to the Parish the undesirables of the whole Metropolis.

These drawbacks to the success of the Mary Place Workhouse as a device for reducing Able-bodied Pauperism did not, for a couple of decades, suffice to bring the experiment to a close. The end came as it had come to Poplar, from the very nature of the "mixed" authority under

which the Able-bodied Workhouse was placed. From the very beginning of the experiment there were members of the Kensington Board of Guardians who failed to understand why that Board should be at the expense of maintaining a separate Workhouse at Mary Place, which was always half-empty, for only a few dozen inmates, when there was plenty of room in their own great Marloes Road Workhouse, with all its different classes of paupers. Already in 1883 it was proposed "that having regard to the small number of Able-bodied Paupers who have been received into the Mary Place Workhouse since it has been opened for their reception, and the large expenditure incurred in the maintenance of a competent staff to superintend the management of the same, it is now deemed expedient to abandon Mary Place as an Able-bodied Workhouse." And though this resolution was defeated, we see similar resolutions brought forward again and again. The unnecessary cost of a separate establishment furnishes constant ground of complaint. In 1890 it was actually decided to abandon the experiment; and it needed all the private influence of the Local Government Board on the Kensington Guardians to get this decision reversed. Later on we see developed another line of attack. As the accommodation of the Mary Place Workhouse was never fully utilised by the really Able-bodied, it became more and more the custom of the Kensington Board to transfer thither other classes of men, in order to relieve the pressure at the Marloes Road Workhouse. For the Kensington men, at any rate, the tasks at the Mary Place Workhouse became more varied. We hear of selected inmates doing most of the work of building and decorating certain additions to the premises. Wood-chopping was added to the regular tasks, and men, not certified for stone-breaking, but able to do this work, began to be increasingly transferred. We hear of the "partially Able-bodied men" sent from the Marloes Road Workhouse to that at Mary Place, for whom suitable employment has to be found; we find a large proportion actually sent to the infirmary; we have special mention of the "men over sixty." "In addition to employing this class in the wood

shed," reports the Master in 1904, "I have utilised them in place of Able-bodied men in domestic work, painting and whitewashing the Workhouse and Relief Office premises, small repairs to the building, mending boots and clothing, and such like work suitable to their capacity." On this the Local Government Board drew attention to the long hours of work at Mary Place and withdrew its former approval of them, "now that it is used as a branch Workhouse for Kensington paupers." The hours of work were then altered to make them no longer than those usual in ordinary General Mixed Workhouses under the General Consolidated Order of 1847. Finally, in March, 1905, seeing that the Mary Place Workhouse had already become merely a branch Workhouse of the Kensington Union, and that all the available accommodation was likely to be required for Kensington Paupers of one class or another, the Guardians decided to bring to an end the experiment begun with such high hopes twenty-two years before, and definitely to refuse "to continue to take in Able-bodied men from other Metropolitan Parishes and Unions." With the withdrawal of the Able-bodied of other Unions and Parishes, concurrently with the transfer of the semi-Able-bodied and of persons over sixty from the Marloes Road Workhouse, the whole character of the Mary Place Workhouse became gradually transformed. The mixture in a single institution of the Able-bodied and the physically disabled, of men in the prime of life and men of 65, 70 or 75 years of age, led to the invariable relaxation of discipline characteristic of the General Mixed Workhouse. It was, for instance, found impracticable, as the Master informed us, to prevent anybody from smoking in a place where the inmates over 60 were allowed to smoke, and those over 65 were actually supplied with tobacco. It is significant that criticism of the conditions of this Workhouse from 1904 onwards all take the form of objections to its severity. "Day-room accommodation," says the Inspector in 1906, "is very badly needed at the Mary Place Workhouse. At present there is only one room (60 feet by 15 feet) available for purposes of dining-room, day-room, and holding divine

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service. On Sunday in cold weather some ninety men are practically confined to this one room for the whole day; they sit there hour after hour, closely packed on forms before meals, through meals, and after meals. The physical and mental discomfort must be very great. The Guardians are considering the question of providing additional day-room accommodation, but even at the best this must take some time, and, in the meantime, I think the Guardians might well consider whether they should not send there only (1) the young able-bodied, and (2) refractory or less deserving semi-able-bodied, aged or infirm. The more aged and deserving poor should not, if possible, be relieved under conditions of extreme discomfort which involves their being penned up for many hours in close contact with undesirable and possibly demoralising characters."

Undismayed by successive failures, the Local Government Board has, even whilst we were considering the question, started another Able-bodied Test Workhouse for the Metropolis, by an Order, dated September 8th, 1908, setting aside the Belmont Road Workhouse, Fulham, for "adult male persons who are not infirm through sickness," from any Union of the Metropolis.

(iii.) *Birmingham*

Meanwhile Midland and Northern Unions were experimenting with other forms of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse. In Birmingham, a stoneyard had been opened in the winters of 1878-79 and 1879-80, to serve as a Labour Test to men on Outdoor Relief. But, as we read, the:—

"Test proved a delusion. There were a few honest, industrious men who scrupulously performed their tasks. But in the majority of cases the *quasi* stone-breakers stood round large fires during the greater part of the day, and in the evening received their relief for the mere shadow of labour. . . . The able-bodied poor of the neighbouring districts were attracted to Birmingham, and the ratepayers of the parish soon found themselves supporting large numbers of men who were justly chargeable to neighbouring Unions.

"Outdoor Relief men were daily increasing. . . . Many of the

latter were mere youths who never really worked, and who earned nothing, even when set to work by the Guardians. . . . These were of a type that required careful and patient dealing, that their apparent insubordination might not break out into something worse."

At the suggestion of Mr. Henley, the Local Government Board Inspector, the Birmingham Guardians "borrowed from the Corporation a large disused factory, and fitted it up rapidly as a branch Workhouse, and offered the test to all the single able-bodied men. It was so very successful that they determined next summer to build this test house. They do things rapidly in Birmingham. They built a three-storied building of brick and slate in six weeks, and it was then opened." Great was the initial success:—

"During the ten days the Test House had been in operation," we read, "the number discharged from the Workhouse to go to the Test House was 70; of these only 53 went. The number of orders given by Relieving Officers was 32; 28 of these went. Of these 81 who went to the Test House, 8 were sent back to the Workhouse by the Medical Officer, 15 discharged themselves, 3 were sent to prison for refusing to do their tasks, 1 absconded and was afterwards sent to prison."

Mr. Henley reports a Return by the Clerk to the Guardians for three months, showing the "number of orders given by relieving officers, 276; number of such orders used, 274; sent direct from Birmingham Workhouse or West Bromwich Workhouse, 110. Total admitted, 384; discharged, 340: remaining on February 26th, 1881, 44; average length of stay in the test house, about one week. Strict discipline has been maintained, all refractory paupers being taken before the magistrates and summarily dealt with. The test house has had an immensely deterrent effect upon idle, dissolute, and worthless fellows. Its success is far beyond the most sanguine expectations of the Guardians. During the week-ended January 1st, 1881, no persons were set to work in the stoneyard under the provisions of the outdoor labour test order, whereas in the corresponding week of 1880 the number of cases so relieved was 706." A year later a local newspaper states that:—

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"The Test House had had the effect of relieving persons who were really destitute, and of preventing persons who had other means of living from coming on the Guardians. It was also a relief to the Workhouse of a class that interfered to a great extent with the due discipline of the workhouse."

For some years the Guardians remained fully satisfied with this easy system of reducing Able-bodied Pauperism. There continued to be, as we read, "a strong dislike amongst the inmates to going to Floodgate Street, some of them preferring to leave the house. . . . Out of ten inmates sent to Floodgate Street, only one had arrived." Those who unwarily entered its portals frequently preferred to get sent to prison. In 1886, "a Return recently presented to the Board of Guardians states that forty-one prosecutions took place last year for neglect to perform tasks at the Test House, and that in each case convictions took place." Sometimes, however, neither the zeal of the Master nor the acquiescence of the men served to induce the magistrates to let them go to prison. The Guardians found themselves driven to resolve that "no prosecutions should be instituted against any inmate of the Test House or Workhouse until the complaint or charge against such inmate shall have been investigated by at least one member of the Revision Committee." It was found that there had been prosecutions for non-fulfilment of tasks in which convictions had not been secured.

So far as we can ascertain, the *regimen* at the Birmingham Test House was as severe as—perhaps even more severe than—that at Poplar or Kensington. Instead of any kind of bed, the men had to lie together on a continuous sloping shelf, similar to that which used to be provided in the worst of the "Associated Wards" set aside for Vagrants. The task of oakum-picking for prisoners sentenced to hard labour was 3½ lb. for a man, and 2 lb. for a woman; but the unconvicted destitute men and women at the Test House had to do 4 lb. and 3 lb. respectively.

The selection of persons to whom to "apply the Test" seems to have been lacking in consistency. "When a single able-bodied man applies for relief," we read, "he

is at once given an order for the Test House. . . . In a week or two the case comes up for revision. But in the majority of cases the pauper has taken his or her discharge. . . . If the pauper's conduct and further investigation show that the case is one of genuine poverty . . . after a term of probation in the Test House" he is transferred to the General Mixed Workhouse. On the other hand, the married man had the privilege of beginning his career as a pauper in the General Mixed Workhouse. We read that "a married man gets an order for himself and family to enter the Workhouse. The same course is pursued with regard to women. Every Tuesday a small committee—the Revision Committee—sits at the Workhouse and reviews the list of inmates. . . . If the pauper prove to be a man or woman of bad character, or a gaol bird, or a confirmed loafer, an order for the Test House is given." This association of all the single men (and, therefore, the younger men), even of the best character, with those married men of notoriously bad character, seems to us a peculiar arrangement. It was said that "the majority of them [the inmates of the Test House], by all accounts, are not the sort of people with whom respectable working people, driven to the Workhouse by stress of poverty, old age, or weakness, ought to be compelled to mix." Presently, when a time of stress came, we find it noted that "the Guardians . . . have for some time steadily refused to open their stoneyard to able-bodied men applying for relief, but have dealt with all such cases by giving an order for the Workhouse, with the result of a steady diminution of pauperism."

The end of the story was the same at Birmingham as it was at Poplar and Kensington. At the very time that Mr. Henley was explaining to the Select Committee of the House of Lords how Birmingham had solved the problem of Able-bodied Pauperism, the Guardians were beginning to abandon the experiment. Just as at Poplar and Kensington, it proved impossible for a "mixed" Authority, having under its care, not the able-bodied alone, but also the children and the sick, the infirm and the aged, supervised by a Poor Law Division which was

itself responsible for all these varied classes, to keep its institutions really separate and distinct. Already in 1885 we notice the letter from the Local Government Board—exactly the same letter that we found at Poplar and Kensington—assenting to the transfer, from the General Mixed Workhouse, which had become overcrowded, to the Test House, which was (as it was intended to be) nearly empty, of some of the men over sixty years of age. Within a few months—just as at Kensington—we see the *regimen* at the Test House become less severe. In September 1886, “arrangements were being made to introduce wood-chopping as a Labour Test at the Test House. . . . The intention of the Committee was to put oakum-picking only on those people who came to the Guardians because they would not work outside.” Presently the Guardians made up their minds to build a new Infirmary, which relieved the pressure on the accommodation, and it seemed to be unnecessary to maintain what had (as at Kensington) become only a branch Workhouse.

“At a meeting of the Workhouse Management Committee,” we read in 1889, “the Test House Sub-committee reported that, owing to the very small number of inmates of the Test House, and owing to the fact that many inmates of the Workhouse are being transferred to the Infirmary (recently opened), they were of opinion that the Test House should be closed, and that the paupers there should be sent to the Workhouse.”

Notwithstanding this experience of 1880-89, in striking accord with that at Poplar and Kensington, we see the Local Government Board in 1906 once more falling back on the suggestion that the Destitution Authority, with all its mixture of paupers of all ages and classes to maintain, should set up a separate institution for the Able-bodied. On December 20th, 1906, the Board thought it right:—

“To draw the Guardians’ attention to the great increase which has taken place during the past few years in the number of adult male indoor poor.” It does not “appear that the great increase in the number of male inmates is accounted for by depression in trade, as notwithstanding the improvement in trade which took place during the year 1905, the number of male inmates increased during that year from 1573 to 1679. . . . The Board would re-

commend the Guardians to consider the advisability of providing separate accommodation available for able-bodied men only, in which strict discipline could be maintained, so as to secure results similar to those which were experienced in connection with the separate block provided by the Guardians for that purpose in 1880, and closed shortly afterwards for lack of inmates." . . . It appears that "considerably more than half of the applications for relief are from persons frequenting common lodging-houses and from persons lodging in small tenements, and it is possible that persons are attracted to the parish by the conditions prevailing in the Workhouse."

In April 1908 such a Test House was again started at Birmingham, exactly as was done eighteen years ago.

(iv.) *Manchester and Chorlton*

We were glad to be told by the Chief Inspector of the Local Government Board, at the outset of the investigation that we are describing, that we should "find a model House of that description in Manchester," actually in working order, which we were advised to examine. The Tame Street Workhouse, opened in 1897, and managed by a Joint Committee of the Manchester and Chorlton Boards of Guardians, is a small institution, accommodating about 250 men and 50 women. But it is attached to one of the largest Casual Wards in the United Kingdom, built to accommodate many hundred persons, the whole institution being under one Master and Matron. When we visited the institution we were struck with the absolute silence preserved by the men at meal times and with the military discipline with which they were marched to and from their work. The diet is of the plainest, and there is no tea or tobacco to compensate for what seems to us positive deficiency of nourishment.

The procedure is as follows:—During the winter months the men are kept at work cleansing the huge Vagrant Wards, owing to the absence of women, but directly the spring comes and the Master, from his knowledge of the labour market, decides that the men could get employment, a process of "testing out" begins. The men are put, one by one, to do stone-pounding, in cubicles in

an enclosed building. Unlike the managers of most Able-bodied Test Workhouses, the Master of that at Tame Street seldom prosecutes; he had not, in fact, taken an inmate to the Police Court for two years. He relies for the maintenance of discipline on the facilities offered by the proximity, under his management, of the Casual Ward. Every inmate is obliged to perform the task that is given to him, in whatever place the Master chooses. If a man is recalcitrant he is put, day after day, into one of the solitary cells built for the temporary sojourn of the Vagrants. Here he is given a definite taste of stone-breaking, or sometimes he is merely told "to count the bricks." But to this solitary confinement in idleness, which is not counted as punishment at all, and which may be without limit so long as the man is brought back each night to the dormitory, the Master may add, "with or without the direction of the Joint Committee," forty-eight hours' bread and water diet. We are not surprised that this particular form of the "relief of destitution" is found so far effectual in checking "pauperism" that Tame Street Workhouse, even during the winter months, is never full; and that by June in each year it stands almost empty, with a score or so of feeble inmates allowed, to remain in order to do the cleaning. "I am of opinion," states the Clerk of the Manchester Union, "that the fact of there being a fully equipped Test House to which Able-bodied men can be sent has resulted in both of these Unions (Chorlton and Manchester) being relieved of the cost of maintaining a number of idle men who would have been content to remain in an ordinary Workhouse, where the strict discipline which is necessary in dealing with this class of paupers cannot be effectively applied."

It is interesting to notice in the Minutes of the Manchester and Chorlton Joint Committee all the old difficulties arising. Even the regimen of Tame Street does not prevent recurrence, seventeen men being admitted, during 1907, at least five times, and two of them nine or ten times. There are repeated complaints from the Medical Officer of the Test Workhouse "that a number of men sent . . . from the Crumbsall Workhouse

for the purpose of being put on Test Work were not fit for anything approaching Test Work." We find the Manchester Guardians asking the Local Government Board to *sanction infirm men being transferred to Tame Street*, "as Crumpsall is overcrowded." We have even a communication from the Manchester Board of Guardians to the Joint Committee stating "that their Workhouse is very much overcrowded," and anxiously inquiring whether they might not send to Tame Street a limited number of men, who, "though not fit for stone-breaking," are nevertheless suitable for some form of Test Work; a request which the Joint Committee refused. But apparently the Joint Committee relented. During 1907, at any rate, out of 480 men admitted in the first months, no fewer than 106 were between fifty-five and sixty-seven, whilst 194 were over fifty, and 340 were over forty. The Medical Officer's Register for 1907 tells an even more pathetic tale. Out of the 749 male inmates actually subjected to the gaol-like discipline of this establishment, 27 *were entered as suffering from phthisis*, 124 from bronchitis and bronchial catarrh, 29 from rheumatism, 23 from skin eruption, 19 from cardiac disease, 17 from varicose veins, 17 from rupture, 9 from mental debility, and 107 from physical debility (either alone or with some other disease)—only 293 having nothing the matter with them. We cannot feel that either the diet or the regimen of the Tame Street Workhouse affords the proper treatment for men suffering from phthisis, to say nothing of the other ailments.

(v.) *Sheffield*

The Sheffield Union, noted in the north country for its rigid administration, has invented an even more ingenious device for reducing its able-bodied pauperism. Hidden away among the huge blocks which make up its pauper establishment "there is a Test House of thirty beds. . . . If a man is passed by the doctor as Able-bodied, he is placed there, and has a task each day which he has to complete or be prosecuted. He is worked, fed, and sleeps there, and does not enter the House proper in

any way." Here, as we learn, "the Able-bodied and partly Able-bodied are kept fully employed and created on the lines of the Local Government Board Order, that all who are able to work shall not be *allowed to be idle at any time.*" The character and amount of the work exacted from these merely destitute persons will, we think, surprise some prison administrators. The task has to be accomplished by 5.30 or "the man is prosecuted," *but if he has finished before 5.30 he is given more work to do.* "Since this small Test House has been in force," states the Master, "we have got rid of a lot of them, and our numbers stand at from a hundred to a hundred and fifty less this year than last, and last year was lower than 1905." But the Master has had his discouragements. The ordinary Medical Officer of the Workhouse and Infirmary was perpetually refusing to certify men as fit to undergo this regimen, and an outside medical man with a different view of physical fitness had to be found. Moreover, the Governor of the Wakefield Gaol gave the men a better time, so that recalcitrant paupers were apt to be indifferent to threats of prosecution, and some gladly went to short sentences of imprisonment rather than remain in such a Workhouse. "The marvel is," sums up our Committee, after inspecting one of these Test Departments, "that anybody should face it, and the assumption is that none but men too indolent to look for other work will take it. . . . The question which suggests itself seems to be this: if the problem of 'Ins-and-Outs' is so universally acknowledged, and if the legality of setting them to such severe task work is indisputable, and if such work is so easily provided as here, why is it not universally adopted?" It does not, however, succeed in preventing recurrence. There remain some who apparently have a prejudice against prison, or perhaps have not tried it, and yet are unable to earn their livelihood outside of both institutions, so that they turn up time after time. Thus, out of the 623 men who underwent the Test between January 1907 and January 1908, there were nine who came in and out at least six times, and three of them, indeed, seventeen or eighteen times, and one of them as many as twenty-two

times. These persons, at any rate, must be admitted to have demonstrated the extremity of their destitution. The question then arises whether the "Test Department" of the Sheffield Union, however admirable its severity may be for the punishment of persons convicted of some definite offence, after judicial trial, constitutes a lawful method of relieving destitution under the Statute of 39 Eliz. c. 2. If the present Poor Law is continued, we recommend that the opinion of the Law Officers should be taken on this point.

(vi.) *Compulsory Detention*

The severity of these different processes for "testing out" Workhouse inmates who, as the Guardians (or, in practice, the Master) may choose to consider, might be able to earn a livelihood outside, has been greatly increased by the intrusion into Poor Law administration of the principle of compulsory detention. To the reformers of 1834 the notion of detaining, in a Poor Law institution, any person who was willing to take his discharge, would have seemed preposterous. The whole case for a deterrent Workhouse was based on the freedom of the pauper to leave it as soon as he realised that its conditions were "less eligible" than life outside. This principle is still authoritatively asserted to be essential to the system of Poor Law relief. In the recent Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy—which included the head of the Poor Law Division and the Senior Medical Officer for Poor Law purposes of the Local Government Board—it is laid down that "the purely voluntary nature of the present system of admission into and discharge from the Workhouse is a cardinal principle of the Poor Law; and to give magistrates the power to order the detention of adult persons in a Workhouse might have an effect on the whole system of relief altogether out of proportion to the advantages which might be derived from it." But Parliament has already conferred this power of compulsory detention without a magistrate's order. In 1871 the Guardians—in effect the Masters of Workhouses—were

empowered to detain any pauper after he had applied for his discharge, for twenty-four, for forty-eight, and, under certain circumstances, for seventy-two hours. In 1899 this power of compulsory detention was extended, in the cases of those who had "discharged themselves frequently without sufficient reason," to 168 hours, or a whole week, with no more formality than an entry in the Minutes. The intention of Parliament was clearly to put a stop to the practice of using the General Mixed Workhouse, with its ample food and easy hours of work, as a convenient place of temporary resort. When applied to the "Ins-and-Outs" of the General Mixed Workhouse, this detention for a week at a time may cause little hardship; though the only result in practice is that the experienced pauper gives notice immediately on re-entering, and thus takes his day out regularly once a week, instead of at irregular intervals. But when this power of compulsory detention is used in such a "testing" establishment as that at Tame Street, Manchester, or that at Sheffield, it seems to us that it amounts to a week's imprisonment with hard labour, under conditions actually more severe than those of the gaol. Hence we find, as a matter of fact, the disreputable men gladly accompanying the Master to the police court, actually preferring the Magistrate's sentence of imprisonment to the arbitrary punishments of the Workhouse.* Only those who have some remnant of respectability prefer, under such conditions, to endure the tender mercies of the Poor Law. It is, in fact, part of the terror of Tame Street that the Master does not take the men to the police court, finding his own regimen more effective; thereby dispensing, moreover, with the formality of a trial! We do not think that Parliament can have been aware of this strange combination of a severely deterrent Workhouse with an arbitrary power of compulsory detention without trial.

(vii.) *Summary of Objections to the Maintenance of a Penal Establishment by a Destitution Authority.*

We have felt it necessary to go at some length into the actual experience of these Able-bodied Test Workhouses, because practically no information on the subject will be found in the Commission's proceedings, or has been published by the Local Government Board. And yet the "Able-bodied Workhouse" is, without reference to the actual experience of such institutions, still confidently put forward as the proper method of relieving Able-bodied Destitution. Mr. J. S. Davy, C.B., for instance, the head of the Poor Law Division of the Local Government Board, informs us that he "most strongly advocates a Test House" for the Able-bodied applicants for relief in the County of London, and "in all large urban communities." Mr. Lockwood, the late Inspector for the Metropolis, has persistently urged, as a necessary part of the machinery of the Poor Law, the establishment of "suitably equipped institutions to which you would send the so-called Able-bodied," for continuous work under "disciplinary treatment . . . impossible in a large Mixed Workhouse." We feel constrained to point out that, if the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 were repealed, and if the Able-bodied were thus again thrust back into the Poor Law, the Able-bodied Test Workhouse would, as a matter of fact, be the only alternative that the Poor Law Division of the Local Government Board would have, in time of normal trade, to offer to the methods of relief now provided by the Distress Committees. We gather, moreover, that, under the name of "Industrial Institution," it is upon the Able-bodied Test Workhouse that the majority of our colleagues recommend Parliament to rely, as the principal and the normal method of relieving Able-bodied Destitution by the new Destitution Authority that they propose. Hence, we think it worth while to summarise our objections to the provision of any such institution by a Poor Law Authority responsible alike for the Children, the Sick, the Mentally Defective, and the Able-bodied, however that Authority may be constituted.

Before stating our objections in detail, however, we must call warning attention to the enormous plausibility given to the Able-bodied Test Workhouse by the fact that, wherever it has been tried, and for as long as its principles have been strictly carried out, it has been strikingly and almost instantly successful in its primary object of ridding the Destitution Authority of the able-bodied pauper. For those who can see no further end than this, it will continue to be the one infallible and sufficient solution of the problem of the Able-bodied poor; and its "successes" will be brought up again and again to justify demands for new Test Workhouses, and for legislative measures to prevent their relapse into General Mixed Workhouses. What its advocates do not see is that to rid the Guardians of a nuisance is not to rid society of it. If the Test Workhouse abolished the Able-bodied loafer there would be a better case for it. But if it merely keeps him out of the Workhouse, it may be as mischievous as a plan for emptying our prisons, by simultaneously increasing their rigour and opening their doors. Whilst an able-bodied man remains a loafer and a wastrel, it is urgently desirable that he should be in hand and under observation rather than lost in the crowd. The Destitution Authority must not reduce its expenses by shirking its duties. Such economy is delusive: it may produce a saving on the local rate, but not on the national balance-sheet. The Able-bodied who shun the Test Workhouse are supposed to be face to face with the alternatives of either working or starving. As a matter of fact our social organisation is still far too loose to narrow their choice to any such extent. They can beg; they can steal; they can sponge; they can practise or exploit prostitution; they can combine the predatory life with the parasitic by shifts of all sorts; and the tax-payer has to pay for policemen and prisons what he has saved on Workhouses and Relieving Officers, besides supporting the loafer, directly or indirectly, just as much as he did before. A room cannot be cleaned by simply sweeping the dirt under the sofa; and the burden of destitution cannot be lightened by simply sweeping the pauper out of the Workhouse into the street. That process does not

reduce his weight by a single ounce; and unless he immediately becomes a productive worker, somebody has to bear it. Driving him from pillar to post is a needless labour and expense if he has to be fed at the private post or the prison post after taking himself away from the workhouse pillar. As far as it has been possible to follow him up, there is no evidence that he costs less, or does more, out of the Test Workhouse than in it.

And there is the further flaw in the case for the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, that in establishing a worse state of things for its inmates than is provided by the least eligible employment outside, it is not only guilty of deliberate cruelty and degradation, thereby manufacturing and hardening the very class it seeks to exterminate, but it protects and, so to speak, standardises the worst conditions of commercial employment. It is neither desirable morally nor economical financially to drive men and women to accept "the least eligible" outside employment. It is these very "least eligible" employments that have created, and are still creating, a huge residuum of feeble-bodied people who cannot work and able-bodied people who regard work as the worst of evils. Before condemning a man for being "work-shy," we should inquire what are the conditions of the work he has learnt to be shy of. It may be that in depriving some of the least eligible employments of their workers, even at the cost of maintaining these workers in idleness, the more indulgent or extravagant Destitution Authorities have been unwittingly doing public service in compelling the employers to raise the standard of eligibility somewhat. The truth is that nobody who is acquainted with ordinary industrial employment at its worst, in the unregulated trades, dare propose, explicitly, that any public institution, even for criminals, should underbid it in disregard of the health, comfort and character of its employees. But such underbidding is the very keystone of the theory on which the Able-bodied Test Workhouse is founded. In rejecting it as impracticable, and, indeed, as monstrous, we are forced to turn our backs on the whole system which it holds together, and to seek deliverance in another direction.

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Let us now take the objections to the Able-bodied Test Workhouse in detail as they arise in practice. The first is that the policy of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse will not, as a matter of fact, be carried out for any length of time by an Authority dealing with all classes of destitute persons. The investigations that we have made into practically every case in which such an establishment has been started prove, we think, conclusively that the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, when it is managed by a Destitution Authority, sooner or later crumbles back into the General Mixed Workhouse. The reason for this is obvious. An Authority charged with the maintenance of all classes of destitute persons finds it difficult enough, in its laudable desire to economise in officials, in sites, and in bricks and mortar, to keep entirely separate and distinct institutions even for children, for sick persons, for the mentally defective, and for the aged and infirm. In fact, as we have already demonstrated in Part I. of our Report, the Destitution Authorities of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland have, in spite of constant pressure from the Central Authority, failed to provide such separate and distinct institutions for the bulk of the Non-able-bodied classes. What is difficult in the case of the Non-able-bodied is impracticable in the case of the Able-bodied. A Board of Guardians has permanently on its hands a certain number—generally an increasing number—of sick persons, of children, of the aged and infirm. Once an infirmary or a school, an asylum or an almshouse is built and placed under separate management it is highly improbable that it will ever stand empty. But the whole object of an Able-bodied Test Workhouse is to “test out” Able-bodied persons who have settled down to the comforts of the General Mixed establishment. In other words, the ideal Able-bodied Test Workhouse would, in normal times, stand empty. If such an institution were run by an Authority exclusively concerned with the suppression of Able-bodied Pauperism, the emptiness of its establishment would be a standing proof of its efficiency. But when the Authority managing such an institution is under perpetual pressure to provide additional accommodation for other classes, the sight of

an empty building with unoccupied officials, at a heavy ground rent, seems, both to the administrator and his constituents, a proof of incompetence. Hence, the success of the establishment as a "test," its very prevention of Able-bodied Pauperism, eventually leads to its disestablishment.

The crumbling back of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse into the General Mixed Workhouse is accelerated by the indefiniteness of the class for whom it is provided. It is easy to pick out from a crowd the children, the aged and infirm persons and even those who are sick. But to discriminate the able-bodied from the semi-able-bodied is a task which can never be perfectly performed and about which there will be perpetual difference of opinion. When an authority, having to maintain semi-able-bodied persons, has free access to an institution intended to "test out" able-bodied persons, it will, as is, we think, proved by the foregoing analysis of the history of the Able-bodied Test Workhouses, be perpetually attempting to make use of the "test" as — to use the candid words to us of the Clerk of a Metropolitan Union—"an easy and ready method of getting rid of very troublesome cases." Now, "as every Workhouse Master and every Guardian knows, it is by no means the actual able-bodied man who is most troublesome; it is the man who has just enough amiss with him to prevent the doctor certifying that ~~he is able to do~~ hard work." At first the Medical Officer of the Test House, assuming he is a conscientious official, will send back to the mixed establishment the dirty or dissolute man, or the refractory and disorderly inmate, who happens to be suffering from incipient phthisis, from chronic rheumatism, or from bad varicose veins, or disabling rupture. But if he is the servant of the very Authority that *wants* these cases "tested out" of their establishments, he will, sooner or later, either relax his standard of able-bodiedness, or he will be replaced by a more accommodating medical official. To put it paradoxically, the only chance of separating the Able-bodied from those who are so deficient in physical health or mental capacity as to be Non-able-bodied, is to have three separate and distinct Authorities—an Authority

dealing with able-bodied persons, an Authority dealing with physically-sick persons, and an Authority dealing with mentally-defective persons. These separate Authorities will each of them quickly discover if an inmate belongs by right to either of the others, and will see that he is transferred to the proper institution. If, on the other hand, all the classes are under one and the same Authority, there is no inducement to eliminate cases from the particular institution into which they have been improperly admitted—it is, in fact, easier to keep them all together under one roof in a “mixed” institution, where the classification avowedly permits of each grade “shading off” by imperceptible degrees into the other grades. Any such “mixed” establishment is inevitably, so far as its regimen is concerned, first influenced in favour of uniformity, and then dominated by the “marginal case.” Any effectively specialised treatment, such as would be really appropriate to the Able-bodied, the Mentally-Defective, and the Physically Infirm respectively, becomes impracticable. In short, as the authors of the 1834 Report themselves foresaw, the very indefiniteness of the line of cleavage between those who are able-bodied and those who are slightly sick or slightly defective, inevitably tends in practice, under a “mixed” Authority, to restate and to maintain the lax and unspecialised treatment, unsuited to any class whatsoever, that is characteristic of the General Mixed Workhouse.

These administrative obstacles to the continued maintenance of an Able-bodied Test Workhouse by a Destitution Authority are, however, of no account compared to our radical objection to the maintenance, at any time, of a penal establishment by such an Authority. A Destitution Authority may, or may not, have the machinery for discovering whether a person is destitute. It certainly has no machinery for discovering whether or not a person ought to be subject to penal tasks or penal discipline. It seems to us an extraordinary perversion of the law that a Relief Committee, the Master of a General Mixed Workhouse, or the Superintendent of a Test Department, should presume, without legal training, without hearing evidence in open Court,

without any proper defence of the person arraigned, to impose on a destitute person what is admittedly worse than a sentence of hard labour merely *as a way of relieving his destitution*. Equally unsatisfactory is the provision made inside the Able-bodied Test Workhouse for the wise treatment of such persons, even assuming that they are in some way or other worthy of punishment. No one acquainted with the administration of prisons, or reformatories, or foreign Penal Colonies will under-rate the difficulty of securing for such institutions officers with the requisite characteristics for making discipline curative and reformatory. The whole technique of dealing with adults who are criminal, disorderly, or merely "work-shy," is yet in the making. Boards of Guardians and their officials are not only deficient in this technique; they have not the remotest idea that any such special qualification or training is necessary. Any man or woman, if a disciplinarian, is good enough as Labour Master or Labour Mistress. Any Superintendent who "tests men out" is considered a success. Hence, the note of brutality and arbitrariness which is so noticeable in these institutions. It is not that the Superintendent or Labour Master is by nature brutal or even unkind. But the constant association with disorderly and defective characters, with no kind of training either in the science or art of dealing with them, forces him to rely exclusively on a rigorous and unbending discipline.

The tragedy of the whole business is that many of the inmates of an Able-bodied Test Workhouse are neither criminal, nor even "work-shy." The "won't works" may come in and out of a General Mixed Workhouse, but they discharge themselves at once from the Test House and seldom turn up again. The residuum that is left behind by this process of "testing" consists (as in fact, it should do according to the very idea of the institution) of those whose destitution, and whose lack of any possible alternative, are real, absolute and extreme. This is admitted by Poor Law administrators who are constantly advocating the Able-bodied Test Workhouse as a method of testing, not a man's criminality, nor yet his disinclination to work,

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but his destitution. To discover destitution is, in fact, the only business of a Destitution Authority. Having discovered that a man is really destitute, what right has the Destitution Authority to punish him?

We come here to the root of the matter. There is a fatal ambiguity about the axiom that the condition of the pauper is to be less eligible than the condition of the lowest-class of independent labourers. Are the conditions of existence in the Workhouse to be less eligible than those of a man who is in employment, or less eligible than those of a man who is out of work and cannot get into employment? If they are merely to be less eligible than the condition of a man who is in full work at sufficient wages, they will do very little to check able-bodied pauperism. The great mass of men who, in London and the other great cities of the United Kingdom, come in and out of the Workhouse, according to whether the discipline is lax or stern, are not men who have the alternative of holding any situation at wages. This may be due either to their own fault or to circumstances over which they have no control. But that does not alter the fact. What makes impossible, as a method of dealing with Able-bodied Destitution, the policy of offering an Able-bodied Test Workhouse, with conditions of existence less eligible than those of the lowest grade of independent labourers, is the existence, in all large urban centres, of a numerous class of men who never do hold situations at wages, but who are chronically "under-employed," as casual labourers, or not employed at all. Owing to the social and economic circumstances that we have chosen to create in our great cities, such of these men as are of a definitely parasitic type make shift on a very low level of existence by sponging on other people's earnings, by stray jobs, by charity, and by what may accurately be described as "pickings." What an Able-bodied Test Workhouse does is to keep these wastrels and "cadgers" off the rates—at the cost of leaving them to roam about at large and indulge in their expensive and demoralising parasitism, a danger to property and the public, and a perpetual trouble to the police. The persons who are actually subjected to the stern regimen of the

Able-bodied Test Workhouse are not these men at all, for they never stay and never re-enter; but the broken-down and debilitated weakling, the man absolutely without an alternative, the genuinely destitute man, who is forced in by starvation, finds the conditions unendurable and takes his discharge, only to be again and again driven in by dire necessity. To put it shortly, our examination of these institutions demonstrates that the "Ins-and-Outs" of the General Mixed Workhouse are nearly always disreputable; the Ins-and-Outs of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, who alone are subject to penal discipline, are a depressed and feeble, but on the whole a docile and decent set of men, who need, if they are to be kept off the rates, not penal tasks and penal discipline on an insufficiently nourishing diet, but a course of strict but restorative physical and mental training, on adequate food, and a patient appeal to their courage and their better instincts.

This consideration brings us to the absurdity of the panacea of placing increased powers of compulsory detention in the hands of the Destitution Authority. We regret to report that the desire to have these powers is almost universal. We have a solemn conference of Metropolitan Guardians resolving, in 1905, "that in view of the fact that the absence of a suitable institution in which refractory and worthless paupers and such as prefer to throw themselves upon the rates and refuse to earn their own livelihood can be dealt with, checks any progress in the work of classification, this Conference is of opinion that it is advisable that the general powers of Guardians who deal with Able-bodied paupers, especially with refractory and disorderly paupers, should be extended, especially in regard to their period of detention." We were given to understand that the Destitution Authorities would presently "seek and press for additional powers of detention on a graduated basis, to the extent of three, six, or twelve months, or even longer." But if this power was obtained by a Destitution Authority, what likelihood is there that refractory, disorderly and work-shy persons would accept its hospitality? If such persons desire maintenance coupled with detention, His Majesty's prisons are open

to them without any great exertion on their part. But, as a matter of fact, prisons are not filled by persons who voluntarily resort to them in order to get a livelihood. Those whom they maintain are persons carefully picked out of the general population by an Authority whose special business it is to apprehend refractory and disorderly persons. In a word, it is useless for the Destitution Authority to run a penal establishment for the refractory and "sturdy rogue," unless it also has the power of taking persons up and putting them there. But why, unless we can invent something better than a mere Destitution Authority, should we take this function out of the hands of the Police and Prison Authorities?

(E) *The Casual Ward*

The alarming increase in the number of Vagrants seeking relief from the Poor Law Authorities—an increase which has since become ever greater—led, in 1904, to the appointment of a strong Departmental Committee (including the head of the Poor Law Division, and the Senior Medical Officer for Poor Law Purposes of the Local Government Board) to report upon the whole question. Though we received some evidence on the subject, we have felt justified in making use of the valuable information obtained by this Committee, as if tendered to us, and were thereby enabled to dispense with much investigation of our own.

The Casual Ward in England and Wales is, in all but about a score of Unions, attached to the General Mixed Workhouse. But the closeness of the Ward to the Workhouse, and the character of the accommodation, ranges from an outhouse and yard behind the porter's lodge, typical of the rural Union, to the entirely separate building, with its own entrance gate, containing row after row, and tier upon tier, of self-contained brick cells for sleeping and working, characteristic of the better administered of the populous urban Unions. "Ever since the year 1871," state the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, "the Local Government Board have put steady pressure upon Boards of

Guardians to provide wards on the cellular system, on the ground that cells, while being deterrent to the habitual Vagrant, relieve the *bona fide* wayfarer of the necessity of associating with him. In 434 Unions, Wards under this system have been built, while in 204 Unions there are no separate cells." A desire to separate the administration of the Casual Ward from that of the General Mixed Workhouse has led, in some Metropolitan and one or two provincial Unions, to the erection of a Casual Ward apart from the Workhouse, on its own site, and under its own Superintendent. In Ireland there is no Casual Ward, but there are many "night lodgers," who are generally accommodated in sheds or outhouses attached to the Workhouse, and sometimes in the Workhouse itself.

To these 638 Casual Wards, placed all over the country at intervals of a few miles, there resort nightly from 7000 to 17,000 persons, according to the season, the weather and the badness of trade. These represent an army "on tramp," estimated to vary, according to the same influences, from 30,000 to as many as 80,000 separate individuals, who resort to the Casual Wards from time to time. Four-fifths of them are men, who are sometimes accompanied by women, and occasionally also by young children. The number of single women in the Casual Wards is infinitesimal. In practice, any person, claiming to be destitute, and not recognised as a local resident, can obtain accommodation. Nominally the applicant ought to seek out the Relieving Officer, and get an order for admission. But in London and in some other towns this is disregarded in practice. In the Metropolis "the casual never goes to the Relieving Officer; his case is always regarded as one of sudden and urgent necessity, and he is admitted by the Superintendent. . . . For the ordinary applicant for relief," stated an experienced Poor Law official, "the Relieving Officer is outside the door, but for the 'casual' he is inside the door."

"The hours of admission vary to some extent. Generally speaking, a Vagrant is not admitted before 4 P.M. in the winter or 6 P.M. in the summer, nor after 9 P.M., but Vagrants who go to the Workhouse after that time are generally admitted, as, if illness

occurred, the Master might be held responsible for his refusal to admit. The regulations contained in the Order of the Local Government Board dated December 18th, 1882, require that on admission the Vagrant shall be searched, and in almost every case this is done, though not always very carefully. If any money is found, it should, in strictness, be paid to the Treasurer of the Union, but as a rule a Vagrant is allowed to keep any small sum he may have on him. Very frequently the tramp brings in broken food; in some cases this is returned to him on his discharge, and in others he is allowed to eat it in the Ward. Pipes, tobacco, and other small articles are returned to the Vagrant on his discharge. . . . In most of the more recent Wards the sleeping accommodation consists of a hammock or a wire bed with a mattress, together with a sufficient amount of rugs; the cells are, as a rule, warmed with hot-water pipes. The regulations provide that there shall be a bell in each cell. In the poorer Unions, where the separate cell system has not been adopted, Vagrants sleep in associated wards, either in hammocks, on straw mattresses, or, in some cases, plank beds. The Local Government Board discourage plank beds, and they are now somewhat rare. Whether they are a hardship or not depends upon the sufficiency of the rugs provided, a matter which is very much in the hands of the Superintendent."

What, however, interests the ordinary inmate far more than any details of accommodation, are the conditions imposed on him during his sojourn with regard to detention, labour and food. In these respects the Departmental Committee found that "diversity of practice in the different Unions is the most striking characteristic of the present system." The Local Government Board for England and Wales constantly advises the Boards of Guardians to detain the Vagrant for two nights, and to exact from him in the intervening day a severe task of work. If he reappears at the same Casual Ward for a second time within a month, he should be detained for four nights; but this regulation is, outside the Metropolis, seldom enforced:—

"It is, of course, much easier," as the Departmental Committee remark, "for a Workhouse Master or the Superintendent of a Casual Ward to allow Vagrants to discharge themselves on the morning after admission without labour, than to detain them and insist upon their doing the regulation task of work; and the discretion which is left to the officers with respect to the discharge of certain classes of Vagrants results in a complete variety of practice."

Even in the Metropolis, which is,

"Under the Order of 1882, considered as one Union, so far as the relief of casual paupers is concerned . . . there is no real uniformity . . . some Guardians do not detain, some give one task, some another, and some practically none at all . . . Each Board of Guardians has a different opinion upon some point or another. Some Boards of Guardians say the casuals are working-men honestly looking for work, and there is no doubt they are, but they know where they are going to get it. When they leave they know to what Casual Ward they are going, and whether they are going to break stones or pick oakum. The consequence is that the London Vagrants flock to Poplar, Thavies Inn and the other Wards where detention and work are not enforced, or where only a light task is given.

"Where a Union carries out the regulations as to detention and task of work, there is always a reduction in the number of admissions to their Casual Wards, but the evidence before us shows that severity of discipline in one Union may merely cause the Vagrants to frequent other Unions."

The food given varies almost as much as does the task exacted, and seems to have no relation to it; in fact, the Unions which exact least work have the most generous dietary.

"On the evening of admission the Vagrant receives his supper, which, under the Order, is to consist of 8 ounces of bread, or 6 ounces of bread and 1 pint of gruel or broth; the same ration is provided for breakfast and supper on the next day, and for breakfast on the morning of his leaving the Wards. His mid-day meal on the day after admission consists of 8 ounces of bread and 1½ ounces of cheese, or 6 ounces of bread and 1 pint of soup. . . . In 374 Unions, he gets nothing but bread for breakfast and supper, and in 240 gruel or broth is given with bread. For the mid-day meal, 474 Unions give only bread and cheese, while 115 give soup or broth. The regulations, therefore, do not secure uniformity in so simple a matter as feeding the Vagrant, and, in many cases, it appears that Guardians give a dietary not authorised by the regulations. Any improvement in the diet of a particular Ward invariably attracts tramps at once, and the habitués well know where to go for the best meals."

Our own investigations fully confirm the Report of the Departmental Committee in respect of the extraordinary diversity of treatment thus meted out by the Destitution

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Authorities to the "houseless poor" and destitute "wayfarers."

(i.) *The Casual's Free Hotel*

We have visited Casual Wards having well-warmed and well-lit cubicles furnished with comfortable beds, and an ample supply of rugs, to which the "occasional poor" are ushered after a really hot bath; and in which they are supplied with an ample meal of hot broth and bread—accommodation at least as eligible as that afforded by the better type of common lodging-house. These Casual Wards are very naturally appreciated by the professional tramp. To quote the words of a frequent customer, a London "Sandwich man," "I have got a nice hot supper, a nice hot bath, a nice clean bunk to sleep in, and a clean shirt to put on, and when I come in here I know what I bring in and I know what I am going to take out." Accordingly, as we are told:—

"At the popular London Wards, the Vagrants begin to assemble quite early in the day, and hang about until the Wards are open. They are then selected by the Superintendent in various ways; sometimes he takes the first comer, sometimes he takes, say, every third man. Owing to complaints by the neighbours, in some cases the Guardians have had to establish a waiting shed outside the Wards. . . . The Local Government Board publish annually a table, in which is set out the number of refusals to admit on account of want of room at the various Casual Wards in London. In 1904 there were 21,367 refusals altogether, and two-thirds of these were in five Wards. These Wards were Thavies Inn (City of London Union), which is an association Ward; Marylebone, which Mr. Simmons describes as 'a nice easy place, only a little oakum to pick; you pick as much as you like'; Poplar, where there is 'no work at all'; Whitechapel, where there is an association Ward, and the work is only oakum-picking; and Hackney, where at that time the accommodation was obviously insufficient. On the other hand, at Chelsea and St. Pancras, where the detention and task are rigidly enforced, there have been no refusals from want of accommodation for the last seven years. No stronger illustration," sums up the Departmental Committee, "could be provided of the encouragement to tramps which lax administration affords."

But these official statistics as to the number of refusals

are illusory. The Superintendents do not, as a matter of fact, take the trouble to note down exactly how many have applied in vain.

(ii.) *The Casual's Prison*

There is, however, another side to the picture, which seems to have escaped the observation of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy. We have ourselves visited Casual Wards in which the premises, the sleeping accommodation, the food and the amount of work exacted, taken together, constitute a treatment more penal and more brutalising than that of any gaol in England. We do not here refer to the dark and squalid out-houses, with the low plank shelving, shared by all the men in common, as the only bed—the old-fashioned Casual Ward of the little Urban District—which is, under the pressure of the Inspectorate, fast disappearing. What has surprised us is to find rising up, in the great midland and northern cities, great and costly cellular prisons, erected with the sanction of the Local Government Board, as the only provision for the destitute wayfarer and houseless poor. Here the cells are dark and cold; the bare stone floor, with one rug, is the only sleeping place. During the day the men are locked in solitary pens and kept for nine hours at stone-pounding, the hardest and most monotonous toil that has been devised. The Superintendents of these Casual Wards pride themselves on having always vacant cells. Every man, in return for the shilling's worth of food and establishment charges, is detained for the full period of about thirty-six hours; and if he is rash enough to come twice in a month, he is detained for four days and five nights, which is nearly the equivalent of what the prison authorities construe as a sentence of a week's imprisonment. But the habitual inmate of a Casual Ward prefers a sentence of imprisonment to the severity of the more rigorous Casual Wards. The statistics prove, to use the words of the Departmental Committee, "that certain men deliberately commit offences in order to be sent to prison. To many of these men prison seems to afford a desirable change to

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the Casual Ward." Armed thus with the weapon of a Casual Ward more deterrent than a gaol—coupled, we fear, with what has been described to us as "brutality" in the administration—Boards of Guardians achieve the most amazing reductions in the number of casual paupers—with the result that the local police find themselves confronted with an equally remarkable increase in the number of unwarded Vagrants.

(iii.) *The Unwarded Vagrant*

The result of the deterrent administration of the Casual Ward is that the Vagrants remain outside. The country then becomes infested with persons "sleeping out," who manage, by begging and other devices, to pick up a living. In response to complaints, the local police become more frequent in their arrests for the usual offences of Vagrancy; the magistrates, if they consent to convict at all, will only impose short sentences of seven and fourteen days' imprisonment; and the prisons—much more comfortable than the deterrent Casual Wards—become filled with Vagrants. Between 1902 and 1905 there was an increase of several thousands in the number of persons committed to prison in the year for these offences:—

"The Governor of Gloucester Prison reports that of 1184 prisoners received on conviction during the year, 593, or one-half, were committed for Workhouse offences, sleeping out, and begging, the sentences being invariably for seven or fourteen days. The Governor says that "such sentences can have no terrors for confirmed Vagrants." The Chaplain of Northallerton Prison reports that "the professional tramp is the most hopeless class of prisoner met with. He looks upon His Majesty's prison as a house of rest and refreshment, and uses it freely for such purposes, deliberately committing offences in order that he may be sent there." Prison discipline offers no terror for such men. Some other method must be devised for dealing with them, or they will be an increasing quantity."

The police and the Prison Commissioners then complain of the action of the Poor Law Authorities in nullifying the intention of the Legislature by leaving the Vagrants unwarded.

A typical example of this ostrich-like attitude of the Destitution Authorities, in dealing with the problem of the "houseless poor," is afforded by the recent controversy between the Manchester Town Council and the Manchester and Chorlton Boards of Guardians with regard to "sleeping out." These Boards of Guardians had set themselves seriously to cope with the problem of "vagrancy" on the lines approved by the Local Government Board. They combined in 1897 to open a gigantic Casual Ward, erected at an expense of £41,000, on the newest deterrent model, to accommodate, at a pinch, up to a thousand inmates. The use of this remarkable prison-like structure brought down the admissions of "casual paupers" from 52,872 in 1896 to 23,684 in 1897; and great were the congratulations of the Local Government Board Inspectors. But what was the consequence? The first reaction was the opening, by a philanthropic agency, of an extensive "Free Shelter," to provide for the crowds of homeless men who were found in the streets. This not only completed the emptying of the Casual Ward, but also depleted the common lodging-houses. Incidentally it also attracted fresh hordes of Vagrants from the neighbouring towns, so that the Shelter became overcrowded, and even the Casual Ward began again to be resorted to. This result led to such an expression of public opinion that the philanthropists closed their Shelter; and the "strict administrators" once more rejoiced at the "suppression of vagrancy." Presently however, in spite of the ever open door of the Casual Ward the people of Manchester found literally hundreds of homeless persons "sleeping out" in the brickfields and other sheltered places, causing nuisance and damage to property. In 1902 the police reported "that there was a larger proportion than hitherto of men who, they had reason to believe, were working men out of employment, willing and anxious to work if they could obtain employment." At first the police arrested the men for the offence of "sleeping out." But the magistrates as often as not dismissed the charge, on the ground "that their position as sleepers out was due to circumstances over which they had no control, and for which they were not responsible." The Chief

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Constable then inquired of other large towns, and found that the number of "sleepers out" was proportionately far less than in Manchester. The Manchester Town Councillors thereupon set themselves to find what was wrong in their town. They went late one night to the Casual Ward at Tame Street which they found only one-third full. They then sought a conference with the Joint Committee of the Manchester and Chorlton Boards of Guardians to discuss the problem. What the Town Councillors and the Chief Constable urged was that, while there were several hundreds of men nightly "sleeping out" in Manchester, the Casual Ward could not be said to be fulfilling its function; and they urged the relaxation of the rules which had made it so deterrent. "We want," they said, "to do away with a serious evil—a great danger to the public health . . . damage to people's property. . . . These men, living and sleeping here under such insanitary conditions, . . . move about . . . carrying contamination round about wherever they go. . . . Such a thing ought not to be." The question, as it seemed to these Town Councillors, was how to get the Vagrants warded, not how to keep them out of the Casual Ward. The Guardians, on the other hand, held that they had no sort of responsibility for the men who did not apply to them; and that it was positively their duty to try to deter people from applying for a night's lodging. "It is not for us," they said, "to go to the brickfields and invite them to come here. . . . We endeavour here to show them that work must be done. . . . If they go to the brickfields there is nothing to improve them in any way. Here we do endeavour to improve them." To this it was replied that the men simply would not come. The Chief Constable insisted that "the question is, How to house these persons? Where should these 300 men go to sleep? What can you do to get the 300 in here?—that is really the point." To this, however, the Guardians were obdurate, and whilst promising to consider again the rules of the Casual Ward, refused to entertain the idea that they had any responsibility for the homeless. We find, however, that after the complaint of the Town Council there was some relaxation of the conditions; houseless men were

taken in at any hour of the night; and the number of admissions to the Casual Ward steadily rose from under one hundred per night in 1903 to nearly two hundred per night in 1907—the latter figure being actually greater than the admissions of 1896, which led to the erection of the Tame Street building. Thus, after a ten years' cycle, and the expenditure of nearly £50,000, Manchester has as many casual paupers as before. Meanwhile, as if to show how completely the existing arrangements fail to cope with the problem, the Manchester Justices have again had to complain of the number of men "sleeping out" in the brickcrofts; and have actually urged the Guardians to open another Casual Ward, to serve as a Free Shelter in a more convenient neighbourhood than Tame Street, in order that these Vagrants may be warded.

What has happened at Manchester is but typical of the history of the last three-quarters of a century, in regard to the provision made by the Destitution Authority for the wayfarer and the houseless poor. The student of the records, both of the Central Authority and of the Boards of Guardians, finds a perpetual oscillation of policy. The number of so-called "Vagrants" rises. Presently an official inquiry is held, a new Circular is issued by the Local Government Board, up and down the country Local Authorities make their Casual Wards more deterrent, more repulsive and more brutalising. The number of applicants for admission falls off, and great are the mutual congratulations. A year or two later it is discovered that men are "sleeping out," philanthropists are driven to make other provision, the police complain of the nuisance of the "unwarded Vagrant," the Guardians themselves shrink back in compunction at the more than prison-like severity that they are inflicting; and the conditions of the Casual Ward become less deterrent. Then the number of applicants for admission again rises; and, this being quite erroneously regarded as an increase in "vagrancy," the same old remedies are once more rediscovered, and the see-saw begins again. Half a dozen times, at least, in the past three-quarters of a century, this oscillation is to be traced, different Unions standing at any one time at

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different points in the see-saw. Finally, the Departmental Committee of 1904-1906, finding the existing administration, alike in its severity and in its laxness, a complete failure, felt compelled to recommend the withdrawal of the whole class of Vagrants from the Destitution Authorities—Authorities who, as they sagely remark, are only interested in the Vagrant when he resorts, in a destitute condition, to the Casual Ward—and the transference of the class to the Police Authorities—Authorities interested in “Vagrancy as a Whole,” and having in their daily “patrolling of the roads” the means of watching the “general movements of Vagrants” in all the phases of their tramping life.

(iv.) *Who are the “Casuals”?*

The recommendation made by the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy appeals to us, as coinciding with the scheme of “breaking up the Poor Law,” and distributing its several services among the committees of the County and County Borough Councils, to which our consideration of the other sections of the pauper army has led us. It would, indeed, give symmetry and completeness to our scheme of Reform to bring in the Watch Committee of the Town Council and the Standing Joint Committee of the County Council as the Authorities for dealing with Able-bodied Destitution, just as the Education Committee will deal with children who are destitute, the Health Committee with the sick, and the Asylums Committee, under its extended reference, with all the Mentally Defective. But further consideration compels us to reject the proposal of the Departmental Committee.

We have, first of all, the fact that a very large proportion of the men who resort to the Casual Ward are not, in the ordinary sense, “tramps” or wayfarers at all, but practically permanent denizens of their particular locality. There is, in this respect, a marked difference between the Casual Wards of such great urban aggregations as the Metropolis, the Manchester district, Birmingham and the “Black Country,” and the West Riding, on the one hand, and those of the rural or small town Union on the other.

In the Casual Wards of the great urban centres the bulk of the men do not even profess to be on their way to any place whatsoever. They are in no sense "tramps" or wayfarers. They remain, for the most part, in or about their own great aggregation, oscillating from one Casual Ward to another, within or not far distant from their own town; and alternating their patronage of these "King's Mansions" by occasionally "sleeping out," taking advantage of any philanthropic or religious "Shelters" that exist, or resorting to a common lodging-house when they have a few pence to spare for a bed. In fact, to use the descriptive phrase of the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834-1847, they are, in these great cities, simply the "houseless poor."

Whatever argument may be derived from the opportunities that the Police Authorities possess, in their constant patrolling of the roads, for keeping the wayfarers under observation, clearly does not apply to the inmates of the Casual Wards of the great urban centres who, whatever they are, for the most part are not wayfarers at all. Moreover, it is clear from the evidence that the vast majority of these men are habitual, we may even say professional "casuals," who live permanently, and almost entirely, on this and other forms of public assistance or private charity. With regard to as many as 98 per cent of them in London, it can be said that "year after year they are there, and there they stick. They are casuals, and casuals they will remain till they go into the infirmary and die. . . . They are not working men. If you give them a job for a day, or two days perhaps, they might do that; but you must not expect them to work longer; they do not like working longer than a day or two. . . . A lot of them are young fellows. If you could get hold of them when first they come into the Casual Ward and get them away, something might be done." As it is, they are "the despair of Poor Law administrators." But this is not on account of their disorderliness; it is not because they refuse to do the task or conform to the discipline of the establishment. It is not for these men that the aid of the Police and the Magistrate is invoked. Professional Vagrants, whether they are of the stationary

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or of the mobile type, "give," we learn, "no trouble whatever. Accustomed as they are to the Casual Ward they know the routine and the amount of work that can be demanded from them. . . . They are able to crack the stones allotted, very rarely breaking a hammer-stick." All they do is to come again!

Very different is the state of things in the Casual Ward of the rural Union or small town. Here practically all the inmates are—whatever may be their characters or their motives—really travellers on the move, wayfarers from place to place. Opinions differ as to what proportion of them are habitual or professional "casuals," living on this form of public assistance and moving merely from one Casual Ward to another. It is, however, clear that, in marked contrast with the inmates of the London Wards, a very large proportion of them—one Workhouse Master said as many as two-thirds—are really labouring men, moving from job to job, or genuinely in search of work. That the majority are not habitual or professional tramps is shown by the careful statistical estimates framed by the Departmental Committee. In their opinion the total number of Vagrants throughout Great Britain rises, in the winters of the worst years of trade depression, to as many as seventy or eighty thousand. In years of brisk trade, in summer, the total probably falls to thirty or forty thousand. The Committee put the total number of the permanent tramp class (including those of London and the other great towns) at about twenty to thirty thousand, the bulk of them oscillating in and closely around their several urban centres. Thus, quite apart from the habitual or professional, there are officially estimated to be, at all times, from ten to fifty thousand persons more or less resorting to the Casual Wards, who, whatever their moral or industrial characters, are not permanent tramps. Hence we may infer that, in good times, nearly one-third, and in bad times as many as two-thirds, of all the Vagrants on the road are, at any rate, not professionals. And the proportion in the rural Unions lying on the great routes must be even greater. We have, therefore, been much interested in the careful descriptive records of all his "casuals"

during the three years 1905-1907, kept by the Master of one rural Workhouse on the route between Plymouth and London. The Master is convinced that more than two-thirds of the men had not been there previously; that one-third of them were "navvies," and about 2 per cent seamen, merely passing from job to job, and using the Casual Ward in their accustomed fashion as a gratuitous wayside inn; that the bulk of the men were mechanics and labourers wandering somewhat aimlessly about in search of work, owing to "depression of trade"; that the painters were, as usual, without employment in the winter, very few indeed of them appearing in the summer; and that, although one-third of the total were admitted more than once within the year, those known to him to be "professional" or "habitual" tramps did not amount to more than 5 per cent. Whether or not the Police have facilities, in patrolling the roads, for keeping under observation that section of the professional Vagrants who go from town to town, we fail to see the superiority of the Watch Committee and the Chief Constable over the Board of Guardians and the Labour Master, for the essential business of assisting those men who are really looking for work (who clearly are those whom we ought to keep in view) to find permanent situations.

(v.) *The Dilemma of the Casual Ward*

The administrators of the Casual Ward, whether they be Poor Law or Police Authorities, will, in fact, like the administrators of the Able-bodied Test Workhouses, find themselves perpetually on the horns of a dilemma. If, in their Casual Wards, they offer anything like decent accommodation, even if this is distinctly less eligible than the lodging and supper of the lowest grade of independent labourers *who are in employment*, they will find their Casual Wards, however numerous and gigantic these are made, overcrowded, not merely, or even mainly, by the habitual Vagrants, but by the limitless mass of Unemployed or Under-employed, including the semi-Able-bodied, and the Unemployables of all kinds. This mass, always large, contracts in times of prosperity, and swells portentously

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in bad years, without seeming—to the Superintendent who watches it stream through his Casual Ward—to differ in composition, in spite of the fact that the proportion of habituais varies from 33 to as much as 70 per cent. If, in order to reduce this casual pauperism, the offer of the night's lodging is accompanied by penal conditions, the professional Vagrant stays away, and leaves the penal discipline to harden and brutalise the respectable man in search of work.

(vi.) *The need for more Prolonged and more Specialised Treatment*

It does not, we think, need more than the two or three centuries of recorded experiences to prove that no alteration in the way that we treat the Vagrant—so long as we persist in confining our treatment of him to his periods of vagrancy—will cause him to cease out of the land. As the Departmental Committee aptly indicates, the cause of the failure has been that the Authorities have hitherto only been interested in the Vagrant, *at those moments in his life when he applies for admission to the Casual Ward.* It is, indeed, the inherent defect of the Destitution Authority that it is absolutely precluded from any cognisance of the men before they become destitute, or ~~after~~ they cease to be destitute. The Police Authority in charge of the Casual Ward would be in no better case. What is necessary, it seems clear to us, is that, if a man is found wandering and houseless, either about our great cities or on the high road, something more is required in the interests of the community than the mere relief of his momentary necessities, with or without punishment. What is required is to take hold of a larger section of that man's life, in order to find out the cause and character of his distress, and to bring him under influences which may set him on his feet. In many cases—on the statistics we make bold to say from one-third to two-thirds of the cases, according as we draw the net in years of good trade or years of depression—what is needed is the opportunity of regular employment in a situation of some stability; and it must be the business of some Public Authority to see, in

the manner that we shall presently indicate, that this is not lacking to any able-bodied man. This, however, is clearly not work for either the Destitution Authority or the Police Authority. Where the destitute, houseless man turns out to be a professional tramp, or an habitual loafer or wastrel, as he apparently is in between one-third and two-thirds of the cases, there must be a proper machinery for his trial for the offence of taking to this state of life, and for his judicial commitment, not to prison in the ordinary sense, but to a Reformatory Colony for a term of compulsory detention. This Reformatory Colony—which would, we presume, serve the whole kingdom—cannot, certainly, be placed under the administration of any of the Destitution Authorities. Nor can we see that the Watch Committees of the Boroughs, or the Standing Joint Committees of the Counties of England and Wales—which have, at present, no institutions to manage more complicated than the “lock-up”—are likely to be any more competent to administer a national Reformatory Colony than the Board of Guardians. What is clear is that, when we have an Employment Authority, charged with ascertaining exactly what situations are vacant, and a national Reformatory Colony to which can be judicially committed the wastrels and “won’t-works,” there will be no place for what we now call the Casual Ward. Of all the ways of dealing with the Vagrants or “houseless poor,” the stationary or the mobile alike, the genuinely unemployed workmen or the “professionals,” the very worst is, whether under brutalising conditions or under demoralising laxness, to relieve them and let them go.

(F) *The Able-bodied in the Scottish Poorhouses*

Under the law of Scotland, dating from at least 1579, as definitely interpreted in 1864 by the final Court of Appeal, it is absolutely illegal for the Destitution Authority to give relief in any form to the able-bodied, or even to admit them to the Poorhouse. This prohibition applies not only to residents, but also to Vagrants, for whom no exception is made. Every applicant for relief, whether

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locally resident or a wayfarer, has, according to the regulations, to be examined by the Parish Doctor, who certifies "on soul and conscience" whether or not he is able-bodied. Only those men (and those single women unencumbered with children) who are thus certified to be suffering from some ailment are admitted into the Poorhouse. We, therefore, supposed that we should find in Scotland at any rate no able-bodied men being supported under the Poor Law. We quickly perceived, however, that the occupants of the Scottish Poorhouses in the large towns in no way differed in appearance from those of the English General Mixed Workhouses; and it was officially admitted in evidence that this was often the case. It is officially admitted that it has been found, in practice, necessary to evade the law by one subterfuge or another, in order, on the one hand, to prevent intolerable hardship to able-bodied men who were absolutely destitute, and to their wives and children, and on the other, to obviate the dangers attendant on leaving hungry men at large without relief. These subterfuges take various forms. The Central Authority itself officially advised the Parish Councils in 1878 that, "in the case of a person really destitute the Inspector [of the Poor] should not carry the letter of the law to an extreme. . . . It is obvious that if a person is really destitute, no long period would elapse before he also became disabled from want of food." This hint, we are officially told, makes it possible for the certifying medical officer to interpret "disablement" or "health" in the most liberal manner. He may, for instance, take into account not only the applicant's physiological fitness to maintain himself, but also "the mental distress caused by the destitution of his dependants. . . . In actual administration the medical officer, relying on the principle of the Board's deliverance, usually accepts a very slight ailment as sufficient to justify a certificate of disablement"—an ailment, for instance, as one doctor told us, "such as he will get from lying in a stair . . . general pains that you cannot call rheumatism. . . . I might put in 'destitution and debility.'" We have, in fact, ourselves witnessed such certificates given on the applicant's mere assertion that he had sciatica! If the

Parish Doctor certifies a man as able-bodied, the latter may at once summarily appeal to the Sheriff, who may disregard the Parish Doctor's certificate—perhaps on faith of another produced by the applicant—and on the applicant's mere statement give a peremptory order for interim relief. Many Sheriffs give the applicant the "benefit of the doubt." "It would probably be a safe rule of practice," the Central Authority advises, not to refuse relief "if the Inspector is of opinion that the Sheriff on appeal would order it."

"Thus the whole responsibility for passing or rejecting applicants, according to whether or not they are suffering from any complaint or infirmity disabling them from work, rests upon the Medical Officer, who certifies the cases sent to him by the assistant inspector. The Medical Officer sits in an empty room, to which enters in succession a stream of applicants, all of whom have been already passed as being actually destitute, that is to say, without the means of subsistence. It is for the doctor to reject them (from every kind of relief, be it remembered) if, on his soul and conscience, he is able to assert that they are free from any complaint or infirmity that would unfit them to obtain a situation. His examination consists, in practice, of asking questions. If the applicant asserts that he has some complaint (such as sciatica, neuralgia, or rheumatism) that cannot be tested by the stethoscope or similar instrument, the doctor certifies him at once. If he complains of a sore foot, the doctor looks at it, and decides whether it is sore enough! It is only the unfortunate novice, who is blunderingly honest enough to protest that he would willingly work if he could get employment, who gets rejected, and turned out into the streets (in a destitute condition, and without even the resource of the Casual Ward). Naturally the Medical Officer, on such a perfunctory examination, cannot take the responsibility of rejection. I watched the process for two hours, and saw many persons whom an English Relieving Officer would have unhesitatingly termed able-bodied passed as eligible for the relief that the assistant inspector had decreed. In fact, in the whole two hours there was only one case rejected. It is part of the irony of the situation that this case, that of a tired elderly man who protested that he could work if only he could get to Glasgow, where he believed he could get employed, seemed to be one of the most worthy that I witnessed. I must add that the kindly Medical Officer did his utmost to persuade him to admit some ailment. As he was too innocent to "play up" the doctor reluctantly sent him empty away."

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But apart from the Parish Doctor's unwillingness to take the responsibility of making it impossible to give any kind of Poor Relief to a man who declares that he is destitute, the law has to be even more directly disobeyed in the case of Vagrants. These wander up and down the country, apparently in at least as great numbers as in England; and there are no Casual Wards. The result is that, in order to prevent their sleeping out, they are frequently given orders for common lodging-houses, sometimes even small sums of money—"a shilling or two to pass them on the road"—on the excuse that they have sores, or "bad toes," or that they are suffering (as tired wayfarers often are) from "sore feet," or even from "debility"; or even without any excuse at all. There is actually special accommodation provided for this most sturdy of all the sections of the pauper host, under the euphemism of "Casual Sick Houses," which date from 1848, and are supposed to be for Vagrants who fall ill on the road, but which are, in fact, often used for accommodating those Vagrants and their dependents whom the Parish Doctor will even certify to have "sore feet," rather than refuse them lodging on a wet night. The result is that, so far as we were able to form an estimate, the proportion to population of Able-bodied men actually in receipt of Poor Relief in Scotland—in spite of all the relief afforded by the Distress Committees under the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, and of the upgrowth in some towns of even a third Relieving Authority in the police—does not fall far short of the number in England. The principal result of the law—apart from the demoralisation which its flagrant evasion must cause, and the hardship inflicted when it is not evaded—is to prevent any suitable treatment being meted out to the Able-bodied when they *are* relieved.

As this result did not appear to be commonly realised or believed in Scotland, we thought it desirable to have the inmates of some typical Scottish Poorhouses accurately compared with those of particular English Workhouses, in order to ascertain what proportion of men were really Able-bodied—"sound, healthy, and Able-bodied men

capable of doing a full day's ordinary labouring work" being classed as A 1, and others who, whilst not so strong and robust as these, belonged to occupations of a character not requiring much strength and were "capable of doing a full day's work at such occupations" being classed as A 2. The result was remarkable.

"As my investigation proceeded," reports our Investigator, a medical man of considerable Poor Law experience, "I found myself gradually coming to the conclusion that the male population of the ordinary Scottish Poorhouse was very similar to that of the ordinary English Workhouse, and that the members of the "turn-out" class in Scotland were practically identical, physically, mentally, and morally, with the members of the 'Able-bodied' class in England. A careful study of the physical measurements and other details I have collected confirms me in this opinion. The age distribution of the population of the two classes of institution is very similar. In Scotland, 49 per cent of the inmates of the Poorhouses visited were over sixty. Of the men actually examined, 27·7 per cent were between seventeen and forty, and 72·3 per cent between forty and sixty. In England, 45 per cent of the inmates of the Workhouses visited were over sixty, and of those examined, 23·6 per cent were between seventeen and forty, and 76·4 per cent between forty and sixty. In every Scotch Poorhouse I found a certain number of inmates whom I could classify into one of the A classes. These inmates were in every respect similar to those I placed in the same classes in English Workhouses." In one large Poorhouse at a Scottish port, out of 264 male adults under sixty, 115 were examined; and of these no fewer than forty-four were found to be A 1, "strong, healthy, and Able-bodied men capable of doing a full day's ordinary labouring work"; whilst eleven more were A 2, "capable of doing a full day's work at their ordinary occupations." In short, both in England and Scotland, "every Workhouse and every Poorhouse visited contained a number of men in every way as well developed physically as the average of the general population." The final conclusion is that "the population of the ordinary Scottish

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Poorhouse is in all respects exactly similar to the population of the ordinary English Workhouse. The class known as 'turn-outs' or 'tests' in the Scottish Poorhouses is exactly similar to the Able-bodied class in English Workhouses."

What appears to us most grave is that, so long as the law prohibits any relief to the Able-bodied, this large and, as we believe, increasing number of healthy, Able-bodied men are necessarily accommodated in institutions organised only for the sick and infirm, where no appropriate disciplinary treatment can be enforced. It is the problem of the General Mixed Workhouse of England in an aggravated form. "In Scotland," notes our Special Investigator, "since there are, theoretically, no Able-bodied inmates in the Poorhouse, the work allotted to the inmates is less laborious, the hours of labour are fewer, and refusal to work cannot apparently be punished. I found that in England the hours of work varied from nine hours at Tame Street to nine and three-quarters at Fulham in the summer, the limits in the winter being eight hours and eight and three-quarter hours. *In Scotland, the hours varied from six and a half at Kirkcaldy to eight at Barnhill.* Out of the 423 inmates examined in English Workhouses, ninety-six were employed in oakum-picking, corn-grinding, or stone-breaking; in the Scottish Poorhouses, out of the 407 inmates examined, only seven were so employed, the usual test work consisting in bundling 250 to 350 bundles of wood." Sometimes, as we have ourselves witnessed, the "test work" is nothing more severe than picking the grass from between the stones with which the yard is paved. It is needless to say that, under the circumstances, there is developing, in Scotland, a considerable class of "ins-and-outs"—indeed, a special variety of "week-enders" who habitually resort to the Poorhouse to recover from their periodical debauches. It is significant that of the fifty-four men of A 1 class whom our Special Investigator found in one Poorhouse in 1908, no fewer than twenty-three had been in that Poorhouse more than twice during 1907, and one man had been in and out twenty-three times during the year. It is accordingly not

surprising to learn that "the greater part of the increase of pauperism during the last decade is due to the chargeability of men."

(c) *Conclusions*

We have therefore to report:—

1. That instead of the National Uniformity of policy in dealing with the Able-bodied, upon which the Report of 1834 laid so much stress, we find at the present time, among the different Destitution Authorities of England and Wales, five different methods of treatment being simultaneously applied.

2. That two of these methods—that of maintenance in a General Mixed Workhouse, and that of unconditional and inadequate Outdoor Relief—in spite of almost universal condemnation from 1834 down to the present day,—a condemnation in which we concur,—are still extensively persisted in; with the effect of perpetually increasing the area and the demoralisation of Able-bodied Pauperism.

3. That we have been surprised to discover that the number of Able-bodied men in health who, in England and Wales, in the course of each year, receive temporary Outdoor Relief, *without even any task of work*, is very large—numbering apparently between 30,000 and 40,000—some of this relief being given on account of "sudden and urgent necessity," but most of it being given as exceptions to the Orders, and merely reported week by week to the Local Government Board for its approval.

4. That the number of *Able-bodied men in health* now in the General Mixed Workhouses of England, Wales, and Ireland is large, probably considerably in excess of 10,000; and that there are ominous signs that, in the large towns, the number of *sturdy* bodied men subjected to these demoralising influences is steadily increasing.

5. That we have definitely ascertained—contrary to the common opinion, and even in viola-

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the huge Poorhouses of the populous towns of Scotland also contain large, and apparently increasing, numbers of Able-bodied men in health, of exactly the same type as the inmates of the General Mixed Workhouses of England, Wales, and Ireland.

6. That the three specialised Poor Law methods of dealing with the Able-bodied—the Outdoor Labour Test, the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, and the Casual Ward,—all, in our opinion, fail to provide treatment appropriate to any section of the Able-bodied, and are inherently incapable of being made to do so. If these institutions are lax (as is usually the case), they become the resort of wastrels and “cadgers,” of the “work-shy” and the dissolute, to whom their demoralising slackness and promiscuity is positively an attraction. To plunge a respectable able-bodied man or woman, in the crisis of utter destitution, into the midst of such persons is at once a torture and an almost inevitable degradation. If, on the other hand, the Outdoor Labour Test, the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, and the Casual Ward are made strict in their discipline and prison-like in their regimen, they are shunned by the vagabond and worthless class of “the occasional poor,” who thereupon contrive, to the great annoyance, cost, and danger of the public, to exist outside them. Their penal severity then falls only on such comparatively decent men as have become too debilitated and too incompetent to gain even the barest living outside; and these, though finding the regimen unendurable, are driven in again and again by sheer starvation. To subject such men to a brutalising regimen and penal severities is useless and inhuman; and it ought to be (if it is not already) contrary to law.

7. That by its provision of mere subsistence, available just when demanded, the Poor Law treatment of the Able-bodied, by any of the five methods at present in use, actually facilitates parasitic methods of existence, intermittent and irregular effort, and casual employment. In our opinion, this evil influence of the Destitution Authorities in the Metropolis and all the great ports ^{to} some extent, indeed, in all the towns—is to-day

spreading demoralisation and manufacturing pauperism on a large scale.

8. That it appears to us open to grave objection that the Destitution Authorities should have been allowed to exercise powers of compulsory detention and of penal discipline, such as those now enforced in the Able-bodied Test Workhouse and the Casual Ward. For the exercise of such powers, we do not think that either the members of a Board of Guardians or its officers, without legal training, without any prescribed procedure, without appeal and without even a hearing of the person accused, are at all fitted. Nor do we consider that a Destitution Authority, or any staff that it is likely to engage, has the requisite knowledge or the requisite experience to enable it properly to administer penal discipline to those who might, in due form, have been sentenced to submit to it. The very use of compulsory detention and penal discipline by a Destitution Authority tends to defeat itself, as those for whom the rigorous measures were intended will, however destitute, certainly avoid applying for admission. On all these grounds, we must unreservedly condemn the proposal that extended powers of compulsory detention of adult Able-bodied persons should be granted to any Poor Law Authority, however constituted. Any such proposal would, in our opinion, arouse the strongest resentment, and would meet with determined opposition in the House of Commons.

9. That any attempt, by a repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, to force back into the Poor Law those sections of the Able-bodied who are now relieved by the Distress Committees, would be socially disastrous and politically impracticable. On the contrary, it is, in our judgment, of the highest importance to complete without delay the process begun under that Act, and to remove the remaining sections of the Able-bodied, once for all, from any connection with the Local Authorities dealing with the Children, the Sick, the Mentally Defective and the Aged and Infirm. It is, in our opinion, essential that whatever provision the community may decide to make for Able-bodied persons in distress should be administered

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by an Authority having to deal with all the Able-bodied and with the Able-bodied alone, and dealing with them, not merely at the crisis of destitution, but in relation to the cause and character of their distress, and the means to be taken for its cure. For all sections of the Able-bodied, the Poor Law, alike in England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, is, in our judgment, intellectually bankrupt.

CHAPTER II

THE ABLE-BODIED AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

AT no time has the relief of Able-bodied Destitution been left exclusively to the Poor Law. Into individual charity, whether among the poor themselves, or by those who are richer, we have been unable to inquire. But any consideration of the subject would be seriously incomplete without a brief survey of those organised charitable agencies, established for the purpose of relieving the Able-bodied, which are specially characteristic of the past century, and which, as we gather, have latterly increased in specialisation, if not in volume. Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, every industrial or commercial crisis, involving a temporary contraction of the volume of employment, has witnessed the distribution of large amounts of food and money to the workless poor. In times of prolonged distress, voluntary relief funds have frequently enabled the Local Authorities to put the Unemployed to work at wages on the roads or sewers. Permanent agencies have been established in many large towns for affording, either gratuitously or at nominal rates, temporary lodging and food. To these "Shelters" for the "houseless poor" have been added, during the last two decades, various "Labour Homes" or "Working Colonies," in town or country, where attempts are made to redeem or reform the more dilapidated of the destitute Able-bodied on the one hand, and, on the other, to select and train for emigration the most promising from among their number.

(A) *Emergency Funds*

"The old system," we are told, "was to ask the Mayor to open a fund whenever there was an outcry as to unemployment. He issued an appeal in the Press or by letter, the response to which, in the form of donations, was, of course, very uncertain, varying with his personal popularity as well as with the general opinion of the wealthier classes as to the existence of exceptional distress."

Emergency Funds of this sort, varying in amount from a few hundred pounds to nearly a quarter of a million sterling, are to be found in the records of the past century, literally, by the hundred. The great distributions in London in 1861-62 (at the East End Police Courts) and in 1886 (the notorious Mansion House Fund) are well known. In 1878-80 such Emergency Funds were started in nearly all the large towns. In Sunderland, for instance, in the early 'eighties there was great depression, and the grass was growing in practically every shipyard on the river. Men, women and children were literally starving. Private and sporadic efforts proved utterly inadequate to meet the requirements of the situation. At length the mayor of the day set on foot an organisation to cover the whole borough. So widespread and acute was the excessive poverty that the numbers relieved by this Distress Committee reached on one occasion the huge total of over 17,000 individuals. At Newcastle-upon-Tyne, we were told, "whenever serious distress has arisen here, say by severe winters, etc., public sympathy has always been evoked. Voluntary distress committees have been formed, money has flowed in plentifully, and district or ward sub-committees have administered the necessary relief after investigation into the cases. Even then there has been a considerable amount of malingering, and caution has had to be exercised."

"The general experience was, however, that distress had become very acute before these funds had started, and, before any organisation could be formed and shaped, untold miseries were endured by the sufferers. In the majority of cases these committees and officials were new

to the work on each separate occasion, and had not the data and experience of previous efforts to guide them. The great part of the work of investigation and distribution had to be carried on at such times as could be spared to the work, and could not, from the very nature of the circumstances, be very thorough and complete. The test of willingness to work was not applied, could not, indeed, be applied, and the funds were distributed in money or kind, really as charities. The result of all these circumstances was that a very great amount of imposition was practised by thoroughly unworthy persons, in many instances the same persons over and over again, and the worthy and deserving generally kept themselves in the background and were overlooked."

"It was found," for instance, at Coventry, "that there were a good many applications for relief from persons who gave false addresses, and who could not be found when inquiry was made, and of those who applied others were not in need of or deserving of help; whilst others in deep need were unwilling to apply, and their almost starving condition was only made known by friends and neighbours."

At Birmingham, "some of the local committees in 1905 adopted the system of giving one week's relief to the unsuitable cases rather than incur the odium of an entire refusal. In five districts, dealing with 2060 cases, 775 were discontinued at the end of one week. . . . The bulk of the one week cases may be taken to have been undesirables."

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that these Emergency Funds found many thousands of genuine cases in urgent need of relief.

"The report of the investigators," says a Chatham report, "are pathetic documents, containing as they do tales of fearful want and heroic efforts to avoid the Workhouse. There is no doubt that the regular help of this fund has already kept many from the fate they so much dread, thus preserving their sense of comparative independence, and relieving the ratepayers of a serious burden."

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Experience indicates, too, that, in the absence of any adequate public provision, such Emergency Funds will never be wanting in any season of distress. During the past decade, various popular newspapers have rushed in, perhaps from somewhat mixed motives, and have raised tens of thousands of pounds, for distribution in particular localities, with hardly a pretence of investigation.

The student of the reports of these Emergency Funds, in all parts of England and Wales, in all decades, will be struck by the sameness of the procedure and of the results. Those concerned in the administration of the money exhibit, to an almost ludicrous extent, in their doles to the Able-bodied, the characteristics of unconditionality, inadequacy and indiscriminateness that we have seen to mark the practice of the Poor Law Authorities in the grant of Outdoor Relief to the non-able-bodied. They add to this an extraordinary element of capriciousness. It depends upon accident or whim, upon the popularity of a Mayor or the circulation of a newspaper, whether a fund will be raised at all, and of what amount. It depends on what particular set of volunteer workers gets hold of the administration whether there will be any care, or no care taken to see that the distribution of doles of money or food does not do more harm than good. Moreover, at the crisis of starvation, when these Emergency Funds usually come in, there cannot practically be much room for investigation or discrimination. It is, or at any rate seems to be, a case of giving food upon "urgent necessity," actually to prevent death. The question cannot fail to arise why is relief in such an elementary form not afforded by the appointed Guardians of the Poor, out of the funds designated for this very purpose under the Statute of Elizabeth?

(B) *Voluntary Relief Works*

Some of the more responsible of the administrators of these Emergency Funds were always trying to use them to start or to subsidise Relief Works, either carried on by the Local Authorities out of charitable donations or by various groups of philanthropists. Thus, at Nottingham

in 1837, arrangements were secretly made with the Town Council to put selected men of the unemployed class upon sewer construction; the difference in cost being made up from the charitable funds.

"If . . . a man with a large family applies for relief, whom Mr. B. [the Relieving Officer] knows to be industrious, who is not of pauper habits, but by the depression of trade is thrown out of employ, and obliged to seek temporary assistance . . . he gives him an order to the foreman of the work in hand who sets him on by taskwork."

In other cases, direct employment was afforded by philanthropy. We find the "National Philanthropic Association" (founded in 1842) employing, winter by winter, fifty or a hundred men in cleaning the streets, "so that able-bodied men may be prevented from burdening the parish rates, and preserved independent of Workhouse alms and degradation. . . . At one time, upwards of a hundred of these orderlies were employed at a weekly payment of 12s. each, under inspectors. During the year 1846-47 . . . the Association has employed, at its own cost, 546 street orderlies."

Innumerable examples of Relief Works of this kind are reported in the local newspapers of 1820-80, at every period of depression. We notice, invariably three characteristics. The work is supposed to be restricted to sober and industrious men, not habitual paupers, thrown out of employment through no fault of their own. Married men with families are preferred. The amount earned is practically never more than a bare pittance, the work being paid for at low rates, and only provided for a few hours a day or a few days a week. The plan, in short, is always one of distributing small doles of "Employment Relief" to selected individuals. In 1878 an attempt by Mr. Francis Peek to systematise and develop this plan of endeavouring "to find partially remunerative employment for the Able-bodied," under a central committee for London as a whole, led to an answer from Sir Charles Trevelyan in which the economic objections to this course were set forth. "Labour," he said, "is an excellent thing. . . . But . . .

it must be labour subjected to the true conditions of labour, the full market rate of wages on one side and severe privation on the other. Charity is also an excellent thing, but . . . when . . . labour and charity are mixed up together, great abuse and demoralisation are always engendered. . . . It was so in the Irish famine. It was so in the Cotton famine. It was so, to come nearer to the point, in the workrooms for women at the East End of London. . . . This should be left to the Guardians to do, who have the law at their backs, and are fortified and guided by detailed instructions from the Local Government Board." It was, perhaps, a growing conviction of the undesirability of this mixture of private charity and the employment of labour that led to Mr. Chamberlain's circular of 1886, and, from that time forth, to the Relief Works being mainly undertaken, as we shall describe in the next chapter, by the Municipal Authorities themselves.

(c) *Shelters and Labour Homes*

The large numbers of "houseless poor" in London and other cities have led for nearly a century to the establishment for them of "Shelters," either free or at a trifling charge, which afford a night's lodging and the necessary simple food. One such Shelter appears to have been started in London in 1822; and from that date Shelters have always been available for the houseless; at first only in the winter months, but soon all the year round. On the establishment of the Casual Wards, between 1864 and 1866, there were no fewer than seven such Shelters in existence in London. It was then urged and assumed that these philanthropic institutions should restrict themselves to providing for a class above that of the "casuals." They ought, it was said, "no longer to admit all indiscriminately, but [to] endeavour to exclude every one belonging to the vagrant and professional tramp class; [to] keep them carefully out; and [to] admit only the better class of the houseless poor." In pursuance of this policy, the older philanthropic Shelters gradually shrank up, and ceased to be available for the ordinary man in distress, leaving the

field to the Casual Wards; themselves lingering on in a small way as institutions for doing, for the relatively few selected cases that they admitted, something more than merely the provision of a night's lodging.

We come now to what may almost be called a parting of the ways in organised philanthropy for the Able-bodied. Down to about 1887 it seems to have been habitually taken for granted that the efforts of the charitable ought properly to be directed to helping and relieving the distressed persons of good character, whose record would bear investigation, who had not drunk or stolen or gambled, and whom misfortune had brought low through no fault of their own. Those who could not stand these tests—classified as the unworthy and undeserving poor—were to be left to the Poor Law. Meanwhile, however, the treatment of the Able-bodied under the Poor Law, what with Able-bodied Test Workhouses, and the penal task and enforced detention of the Casual Wards, whilst in no way calculated to restore men to self-supporting activity, had been becoming more generally strict and rigorous. The result, as we have explained, was that from 1871 onwards the Able-bodied resorted less and less to the Poor Law, and the official statisticians pointed with satisfaction to the diminution of Able-bodied Pauperism until, in 1887, comfortable London was momentarily impressed by the news that hundreds, if not thousands, of persons were always to be found “sleeping out” in Trafalgar Square, along the Thames Embankment, and in every sheltered corner. To the fervent Christian there came the impulse to succour not the well-conducted and respectable alone, but even the undeserving, the outcast, the weak, the fallen. For years the Salvation Army had been at work among such men. “But,” as General Booth declared, “what is the use of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad, desperate struggle to keep themselves alive? You might as well give a tract to a shipwrecked sailor who is battling with the surf. . . . The first thing to do is to get him at least a footing on firm ground, and to give him room to live. Then you may have a chance. At present you have none.” General

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Booth accordingly opened in 1887 the first of his "Food and Shelter Depôts," where food was sold in cheap farthing-worths, and lodging supplied for fourpence a night, both being frequently given gratuitously to the penniless. "We have provided accommodation, now," he wrote in 1890, "for several thousand of the most hopelessly broken-down men in London, criminals many of them, mendicants, tramps, those who are among the filth and offscouring of all things."

About the same time a similar impulse was taking form in another organisation.

"In 1889, St. Mary's Hall, in Crawford Street, formed a centre for Church Army Mission work, and with the approach of winter the problem of the outcast and destitute forced itself on the attention of those in charge. Every evening the captain was distressed by the numbers of shivering, half-starved wretches, who crept into the evangelistic meetings for the sake of warmth and rest. Cold and hungry they roamed the streets, turning in here for a brief respite from their misery. These nightly scenes acted as the spark to a train of ideas that had been with Mr. Carhle for some time, and he was now fired with the determination to see what could be done for the reclamation of tramps and ex-criminals."

The result was the starting in 1889 of the first of the "Labour Homes" of the Church Army, of which there are now, throughout the country, nearly fifty in existence, deliberately relieving, not the selected cases, of proved good character and unimpeachable record, but all and sundry in distress.

"These weak brethren," says a Church Army pamphlet, "come to our Labour Homes by many roads. Some come straight from prison. Some are tramps and loafers, who have never known what it is to do an honest day's work in their lives. Some we take out of Workhouses, or from Casual Wards. Some have been brought low by pure misfortune—many of this class being old soldiers, who have served their country well, but who know no trade. Drink, gambling, and kindred vices gather in their hundreds. Many come through no special wickedness, but from simple lack of power of self-help. These are perhaps the least hopeful of all. It is very difficult to help the well-meaning, shiftless fellow who is destitute of will-power, and cannot keep a situation if he gets one. Most of them have sunk very low in the social scale before they come to us. Hungry and in rags they come, with no possession

in the world save that last one—hope. They come to the Labour Home dirty, slouching, weak in will and body.”

We have accordingly, at the present day, in London and most of the large towns, in rivalry with the Poor Law, a whole series of organised philanthropic agencies providing for the Able-bodied destitute. The simplest and most rudimentary is the Free Shelter, with more or less distribution of gratuitous food, and accepting all applicants indiscriminately, which has been revived in various large towns. Two of the best known are those conducted under the Congregational Union at Medland Hall, Stepney; and by a religious Mission at Wood Street, Manchester, where a night's lodging, of an uninviting kind, is gratuitously provided for necessitous houseless men, without inquiry or the exaction of any work. These institutions, which are much objected to by nearly every one experienced in charitable work, urge, as their justification, that the houseless poor cannot be left in the streets; and that the administration of the Casual Wards and Workhouses is so deterrent that thousands of persons refuse to resort to them.

A development out of the Free Shelter is the “Elevator” of the Salvation Army, and the “Labour Home” of the Church Army, where men are received and maintained and kept at such productive work as they are capable of, whether paper-sorting or wood-chopping, at which they are able to earn nearly the cost of the small subsistence of a single man. This “Employment Relief” suffers from the drawbacks and difficulties common to all Relief Works. In so far as the work done has any commercial value at all, it results in depriving other workers, employed in the ordinary way, of their means of livelihood. If the destitute men happen to be nominally artisans of skilled trades, they cannot be put to work at them at anything less than the customary standard rate, however unsatisfactory may be their work, without incurring the additional reproach of “sweating.” On both these points complaints have been made to us. Convincing testimony was given on behalf of the Firewood Trade Association that the adoption of wood-chopping as the task at the Labour

Homes of the Church Army, as well as in many Workhouses, had definitely resulted in ruining independent wood-chopping firms, in throwing many men out of employment, and in reducing some actually to pauperism. The experiment of the Salvation Army, in setting to work at carpentering and cabinetmaking, such of the inmates of their establishments as have any capacity for such work—at remuneration far below any Trade Union rate—has provoked embittered complaints at the Trade Union Congress. These difficulties and drawbacks of Employment Relief are experienced, as we shall see in the next chapter, equally when the “Relief Works” are conducted by the Municipal Authority.

The third stage is that of the Rural Colony, such as Hadleigh, near Southend, run by the Salvation Army; Lingfield (Surrey) run by the Christian Social Service Union; Hempstead (Essex), run by the Church Army; and the German Industrial Farm Colony at Libury Hall, near Ware; where men taken off the streets, selected from the “Elevators” or “Labour Homes,” or sometimes consigned on payment by the Boards of Guardians, are trained to agricultural or other work amid healthy country surroundings; placed under reformatory influences; and assisted to emigrate or to return to self-supporting employment.

(D) *The Undermining of a Penal Poor Law by Voluntary Agencies*

We are not in a position to give any statistics of the aggregate number of able-bodied men who are, at any one time, being maintained in one or other of these ways by the organised philanthropic agencies, of which we have cited only the most extensive and the best-known.* It is clear that the number thus relieved in the course of the year is very large; and sufficient to destroy any satisfaction that might be felt at the success of this or that Poor Law Authority in “detering,” by rigorous administration, the destitute from applying to the Workhouse or the Casual Ward. For it is clear that whatever may be the harmful

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influence of a lax system of Poor Relief to the Able-bodied, there is the same harm in a lax system of charitable aid to the same class.

"Apart altogether from the sick and the aged," reports the Metropolitan Inspector of the Local Government Board, "there is now a large class in London, to be numbered by thousands . . . [which] consists almost entirely of single men, often in the prime of life, but men to whom nobody could think of giving regular employment. They are devoid of energy and ambition; content to live for each day as it passes with the aid of odd jobs, cheap or free shelters, and cheap or free meals. I believe this class exists in all large towns, but it can, I think, luxuriate nowhere as it does in London, for nowhere else, to the extent prevalent in London, is such a class catered for and encouraged by religious associations and charitable persons, who might almost be supposed to hold it a pious duty to ensure, by creating a constant supply of destitution, that the poor shall be always with us."

This class, it is believed by Poor Law administrators, is increased and attracted to London and other large towns by these very philanthropic agencies.

"London," report the Stepney Guardians, "with its many attractions for the ne'er-do-well, its many ways of helping a man down by its thoughtless almsgiving, its spasmodic outbreaks of eleemosynary 'charity' of the soup and blanket order, its dangerous sentimentalism that cannot distinguish the whine of the beggar from the cry of honest poverty, proves irresistible to the 'born tireds' who are ever ready to receive something for nothing. The village rough, the provincial blackguard, discredited in his own village or town, turns his face Londonwards. . . . It may be that many of these degenerates set forth honest in their intention to seek work, and have become demoralised and unemployable by repeated failure and disappointment, and by consequent privation."

The great development, during the past twenty years, of these philanthropic agencies for the Able-bodied, and their deliberate desire to succour the men of even the worst character, nullify, in fact, every attempt to deal with the problem on the lines of a penal Poor Law. It is of no use, as we have seen, for the Manchester and Chorlton Boards of Guardians to "deter" the houseless poor from relying on the Tame Street Casual Ward, if a religious Mission takes them in without conditions at the Wood

Street Free Shelter. Immediately opposite the Stepney Casual Ward and Workhouse, which the Guardians have been trying to administer on "strict" lines, stands Medland Hall, which is nightly open to the destitute. Thus it is that the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy was driven to the despairing recommendation that

"The public distribution of free food should be subject to control by the Local Authority of the district. Their consent should be required to the use of any building for the purpose, and it should be open to them to withdraw their consent if at any time this seemed necessary in the interests of the community. . . . Further . . . we submit that charitable shelters do in fact require a more effective control than . . . common lodging-houses. . . . We think . . . that an annual licence should be required from the Sanitary Authority in all cases; and that before a shelter or similar institution is opened, the Authority should be satisfied that it is necessary and is not likely to cause harm."

Any such legal or administrative prohibition of the charitable provision of food for the hungry and lodging for the houseless is, in our opinion, neither practicable nor desirable. So long as there exist houseless and starving persons in the streets, there will always be benevolent people to relieve their obvious necessities. This, in fact, is the Nemesis of any system of administration of the public provision for the destitute, which is based on mere deterrence; which does not welcome the entrance of a destitute person as gladly as an Isolation Hospital welcomes a small-pox patient; which does not, in fact "search out" destitution as the Local Health Authority "searches out" infectious disease. We cannot approve all the methods by which the philanthropic agencies succour the destitute; but we cannot condemn those who employ these methods. So long as the legally appointed system attempts to penalise the destitution of the Able-bodied, in such a way that men are found to prefer exposure and semi-starvation outside, it is inevitable—it is indeed desirable in the interests of civilisation—that the starving should be fed and the houseless lodged. It is for the State, not to lay its heavy hand on the efforts of the charitable, misdirected as these may be, but to find a more excellent way.

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Moreover, it is unfair to the philanthropic agencies not to recognise that the community is indebted to them for valuable experiments in the treatment of the Able-bodied, from which, in our opinion, there is much to be learnt by the new Public Authority, which will have to deal with the problem. In two directions, in particular, the philanthropic agencies have advanced some distance farther than any Poor Law Authority in the development of the requisite *technique*. In studying the administration of such a Rural Colony as Hadleigh, we were impressed with the relative success, upon extremely poor material, of the whole apparatus for developing personal character, for stimulating the will, for re-awakening ambition, for exciting emulation, for securing order and discipline without coercion, and industry without the money wage that the almost worthless labour cannot produce. We cannot help recognising the disinterestedness, the moral refinement, and the unsparing personal devotion that have created at Hadleigh a little world in which the inhabitants enjoy a stimulating sense of co-operative production and organised recreation in common; and are able to rise, grade by grade, according to personal merit. What is unfortunately lacking to the complete success of this experiment is, on the one hand, some other Colony to which persons requiring, in the public interest, to be compulsorily detained, could be judicially committed; and, on the other, some organisation for placing out, in self-supporting industrial employment, those who have been regenerated by their training.

The latter requirement—some definite outlet for those who have proved themselves fit for independent life—has, to some extent, been provided by the elaborate system of carefully supervised emigration to Canada that the Salvation Army and various other philanthropic agencies have developed. In the absence of any assistance from the Government of this country these philanthropic agencies have successfully organised an extensive system, not only of helping selected cases, but of personally conducting large parties of emigrants across the ocean, securing them situations on arrival, and in many instances continuing a

watchful supervision over them for years. As in the administration of Rural Colonies, so in the organisation and supervision of the emigration of those who wish to make a fresh start in a new country, we think that the future Public Authority dealing with the Able-bodied will be able not only to make use of the existing organisations, but also to learn much of value from the experience of the philanthropic agencies that we have described.

What comes out clearly is that, however successful these Voluntary Agencies have proved, in one form or another, as specific pieces of administration, whether managing institutions or organising emigration, they cannot do the whole work, and it is not desirable that they should "keep the gate." As we shall describe in Chapter IV. of this Part of our Report, the Able-bodied in distress are of the most varied kinds. No Voluntary Agency can provide efficiently for more than the particular speciality to which it devotes itself. But the applicants that throng its doorsteps are of all sorts; and, without some widespread receiving and sorting agency, exterior to itself, it never succeeds in filling its institution with exactly its own special type of cases, and no others. If Voluntary Agencies are to continue to provide for the Able-bodied, there needs to be, accordingly, some organisation of national scope, by which all applicants can be dealt with in the first instance, and then assigned to such voluntary institutions as may be best able to deal with the particular cases. In such a framework of public authority, we think that the Voluntary Agencies for the Able-bodied may play as important a part as voluntary hospitals do in connection with the work of the Local Health Authority, or as the Reformatory Schools in connection with the work of the Local Education Authority. And there is a second requirement which only Government can supply. At present, the Voluntary Agencies for the Able-bodied are largely at the mercy of the confirmed wastrel and loafer, who goes in and out, from one to another, taking what he can get from each, and perpetually returning on their funds. There is a consensus of opinion that, for the protection of all varieties of philan-

thropic activity, there needs to be some kind of Detention Colony to which the most depraved and worthless persons may be judicially committed, and in which they can be compulsorily detained, at any rate for long terms. For these reasons, it was forcibly urged upon us by General Booth that it was essential to any successful dealing with the Able-bodied that there should be "a central authority analogous to the Prison or Lunacy Commissioners."

(E) *Conclusions*

We have therefore to report—

1. That, apart from other considerations, the maintenance of a penal Poor Law for the Able-bodied has, in the large towns, been rendered impossible by the development of extensive Voluntary Agencies which refuse to allow the destitute to starve or the homeless to remain at night without shelter.

2. That so long as the public organisation for dealing with the Able-bodied in distress is so directed as to result in large numbers of persons remaining in want of the actual necessities of life, on whatever excuse, it is neither practicable nor desirable to prevent Voluntary Agencies from relieving such persons.

3. That the relief thus given by means of Shelters and the distribution of food, whilst it can hardly be made the subject of blame or reproach so long as people are starving and homeless, is almost wholly useless for permanently benefiting the persons relieved; and has, moreover, many objectionable characteristics.

4. That whilst some of the Labour Homes and Rural Colonies present good features, and attain a certain measure of success, they are, in the absence of any Detention Colony for the "work shy," and of any adequate outlet for those who have been regenerated, unable to deal with more than a tiny fraction of the problem.

5. That the co-existence, in the great centres of population, of a penal Poor Law for the Able-bodied, with extensive indiscriminate, unconditional, and inadequate

relief by Voluntary Agencies, produces so much undeserved suffering on the one hand, and so much degradation of character and general demoralisation on the other, as to make it urgently necessary for the whole problem of Able-bodied Destitution to be systematically dealt with by the National Government.

CHAPTER III

THE ABLE-BODIED UNDER THE UNEMPLOYED WORKMEN ACT

It was Mr. Chamberlain who, first among statesmen, realised the bankruptcy of the Poor Law and the utter inadequacy of Voluntary Agencies, as methods of relieving Able-bodied Destitution. At the beginning of 1885 practically all the trades of Birmingham were in a state of extreme depression. "Hundreds of jewellers, silver-smiths and electro-plate workers," we read, "had been out of employment for months, if not years." The result was the starting of a "Mayor's Fund" for the relief of the Unemployed, with the usual unsatisfactory features; and an attempt by the Town Council to "make work" for as many men as possible. These resources were, however, limited, and the Birmingham Town Council implored the Guardians, in June 1885, at least to confer as to the measures called for by the continued distress. The Guardians were "of opinion that no practical or useful result would be likely to follow," and declined to confer, "as they felt that the ordinary Poor Law is capable of dealing with the matter." The reluctance of the respectable craftsman of Birmingham to condemn himself, his wife and his children to the evil promiscuity of the General Mixed Workhouse, or, if he was unmarried, to subject himself to the penal conditions of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse that we have just described, was well known to Mr. Chamberlain. To the citizen of Birmingham, with its active political life, the disfranchisement entailed by Poor Relief may also have been specially deterrent. In October 1885, Mr. Chamberlain himself appealed to the

Guardians to reconsider their attitude. He explained in an able letter the objections to the raising of special relief funds. He pointed out that the Mayor had declared that "it was not possible for the Corporation to find work for any considerable number *without displacing workmen already employed.*" He urged upon the Guardians that "none but the appointed Guardians of the Poor" were in a position to discharge the duty of meeting the distress. And he concluded with the pregnant observation that "the law exists for securing the assistance of the community at large in aid of their destitute members; and where the necessity has arisen from no fault of the persons concerned, there ought to be no idea of degradation connected with such assistance. Those compelled to apply have probably paid rates and taxes in past time. The payment is, in part, an insurance against misfortune." But the Birmingham Guardians remained obdurate, refusing even to give Outdoor Relief in return for work in the Labour Yard. Soon after this definite refusal of the Poor Law Authorities to assume any responsibility for the relief of distress from Unemployment, Mr. Chamberlain was again in office. In the early months of 1886 it was forced upon his attention, as President of the Local Government Board, that up and down the country there continued to be exceptional distress among "large numbers of persons usually in regular employment." The fact that this distress had not manifested itself in the statistics of pauperism did not surprise him. In the well-known Circular of 15th March 1886, the President of the Local Government Board recited as axiomatic that it was "not desirable that the working-classes should be familiarised with Poor Law Relief. . . . The spirit of independence which leads so many of the working-classes to make great personal sacrifices rather than incur the stigma of pauperism is one which deserves the greatest sympathy and respect, and which it is the duty and interest of the community to maintain by all the means at its disposal."

In Mr. Chamberlain's view, the "Ins-and-Outs" and the Vagrants should be left to the Poor Law; but for the person normally in regular employment there was, in

future, to be quite another provision, namely, work at wages under the Town Council. "His hope and belief was," he told the House of Commons, "that the ultimate remedy for exceptional distress of the kind they had to deal with was to be found in the increasing activity of Local Authorities, which he believed had already been very considerably stimulated, and which he hoped to further stimulate." This Municipal work at wages was to be given under two conditions; first, "that the men employed should be engaged on the recommendation of the Guardians as persons whom, owing to previous condition and circumstances, it is undesirable to send to the Workhouse, or to treat as subjects for pauper relief"; and secondly, "that the wages paid should be something less than the wages ordinarily paid for similar work, in order to prevent imposture, and to leave the strongest temptations to those who avail themselves of this opportunity to return as soon as possible to their previous occupations." Mr. Chamberlain did not remain in office long enough to carry out the incipient policy of classification of the Able-bodied thus formulated; but successive Presidents adhered to his views, and re-issued his Circular, whenever distress from Unemployment became troublesome. Unfortunately, the results of the experiments thus set in motion do not seem to have been ascertained or recorded by the Local Government Board; and we do not gather that any deliberate judgment was arrived at as to the success or otherwise of this momentous departure from the Poor Law of 1834. At any rate, when Mr. Walter Long tackled the question in 1904, there does not seem to have been available for his guidance any statistical or descriptive summary of the preceding eighteen years' policy of spasmodically stimulating Local Authorities to provide, for the Unemployed of their districts, Municipal work at wages.

(A) *The Provision of Work at Wages by the Municipal Authorities, 1886-1905*

We have been unable to obtain any accurate statistics of the amount of work annually provided for the Unemployed by the Municipal Authorities in response to the Circulars of the Local Government Board between 1886 and 1905. We gather that for the first decade there was a general disinclination among Municipal Authorities to undertake this provision, and those who did regarded it as merely an occasional expedient for tiding over particularly bad times. But with the recurrent issue of the Circular in 1887, 1891, 1892, 1893, and 1895, and especially after the endorsement of the principle of Municipal work for the Unemployed by the House of Commons Select Committee of 1896, many Local Authorities felt compelled to take action, whilst others, responding to the perpetual pleadings and threatenings of deputations of unemployed workmen, availed themselves freely of this opportunity for demonstrating their usefulness to distressed citizens. "The new activity took many forms. In times of local trade depression or exceptionally severe weather, the heads of all the Municipal Departments were instructed to engage additional men, and sometimes to choose these from the persons claiming to be unemployed, for cleaning the streets, for removing snow, for repairing the roads, for sewer construction, and, indeed, for every variety of Municipal work. Perhaps the most picturesque example is afforded by the Paddington Borough Council, which, in 1904, gave "instructions to the Borough Surveyor to discontinue for the present the use of the Scarifier attached to the Council's Steam-roller, and to carry out any necessary road-picking work by manual labour," expressly in order to employ as many as possible of the Unemployed. In populous and wealthy cities a "Mayor's Fund" would be raised by subscription, and used as a sort of "grant-in-aid" of Municipal works expedited or invented for the purpose of employing the Unemployed. In some other districts, such as West Ham, funds were raised by appeals started by particular newspapers. On

the other hand, in other districts, having fewer wealthy residents, but dominated by men of popular sympathies, the Local Authority launched out into costly street improvements, into open spaces, and sometimes even into new buildings, all undertaken to provide work for distressed residents at the cost of the local ratepayers. But whatever the kind or the amount of the work, or the incidence of the cost, we note, between 1886 and 1905, certain developments common to the whole country, which gave to this method of providing for Able-bodied Destitution its peculiar characteristics and its distinctive results.

The first development was the gradual discarding of Mr. Chamberlain's condition that "the wages paid should be something less than the wages ordinarily paid for similar work." Some Local Authorities began by offering a low wage—2d. or 3d. an hour or 2s. or 2s. 6d. a day; but this led to riots and disturbances. It was, in fact, hardly practicable to carry out this recommendation. If the Unemployed were merely added to the general staff, any attempt to discriminate against them in the matter of wage produced feelings of disgust and jealousy and led to persistent shirking of the work. If it was attempted to remedy this by paying the men piece-work at such an occupation as stone-breaking, or wheeling barrows of earth, it was quickly found that some of the most respectable, hard-working, and skilled men were unable to earn as much as the habitual tramp or dissolute navvy. Moreover, it was quickly found impracticable to employ the Unemployed at their own trades, the only work that the Local Authorities could offer to a heterogeneous body of applicants being that of unskilled labour. The normal wage for this work was so low that any lower wage would be insufficient for subsistence. But even if there had been no practical objection, it would have been politically impracticable to undercut the current rate in the district. The Trade Unions, and indeed the whole opinion of the working-class, would have vehemently objected to any attempt on the part of the Municipal Authority to lower the current rate of wages and the standard of life of the wage-earner, by taking advantage of his necessities as an Unemployed

person. Hence it came to be a matter of course that the current rate for unskilled labour should be paid, and that whenever the Local Authority employed men for skilled work the Trade Union rate should be paid. Thus, the Southwark Vestry in 1895 resolved—

“That all men provided with temporary employment be paid the wage now paid to the workmen of the Vestry, on the particular work upon which they may be engaged.”

At Bradford, as was given in evidence before us by the Deputy City Surveyor:—

“The men engaged on the work provided for the unemployed consisted, as a rule, of machine wool-combers, dyers’ labourers, and others employed in the textile factories of this district. They were paid the standard rate of wages usually paid to outside labourers, of 6d. per hour, *which was, in many cases, more than they were receiving when they followed their regular employment.* They were treated with kindness and firmness, and if they showed willingness to work they received every encouragement, and very little trouble arose in the management of the men, but they were unable to do the amount of work that the ordinary labourer would have done, and, in my opinion, the works carried out by the Corporation cost more than they would have done had the usual kind of labour been employed.”

This process was accelerated by the fact that, as we gather, the Local Government Board omitted Mr. Chamberlain’s condition of lower wages when they re-issued the Circular in 1895, and that the principle of current wages seemed to be affirmed by the somewhat ambiguous recommendation of the Select Committee in 1896:—

“Your Committee can see no sufficient reason why a person employed upon Relief Works should not receive the rate of wages current in the district, if he is able to earn the same.”

The second condition laid down by Mr. Chamberlain, that Municipal Employment should be given on the recommendation of the Board of Guardians, was gradually discarded by the more progressive Municipalities. “The recommendation was not adopted for obvious reasons,” writes a well-informed correspondent in *The Times*; “had it been adopted the men would have been brought into

contact with the Poor Law, and this was precisely what the promoters of Vestry employment wished to avoid." The Borough Surveyor, who had to use the men, naturally preferred to make his own selection according to his opinion of their relative fitness for a particular job he had in hand instead of according to the Relieving Officer's opinion as to their past respectability, the number of their children, and the extremity of their destitution. But the Local Authorities had no machinery to make investigations either into the man's past or into the reality or cause of his unemployment. The easiest way was to open a register and to allow all who claimed to be Unemployed, and who could prove continuous residence in the district for six or twelve months, to enter their names for a share of the Municipal work. From this register, men were drawn as required, sometimes in rotation, those who described themselves as married and as having dependent children being often preferred. Thus, at Bradford, the Report states that :—

"The registry was opened on December 14, 1903, and had to be closed on February 3rd following, as the works in hand were approaching completion, and no further Relief Works were available. During that period 2130 names were registered, and 874 men were notified to commence work, none being set to work except married men who had families dependent on them, and who were rate-payers, or had been resident in the city for six months. The men were employed in four-hour shifts at 6d. per hour, the hours being limited in order to avoid attracting men from other employment."

The practical result of the adoption by the Municipal Authorities of the current rate of wages, together with the large number of applications brought about by the open register at the office of the Local Authority, was the grant of only a short period of employment to each man. This system of short periods appeared to have a theoretical and a practical justification. It seemed the only method of making Municipal employment less eligible than the employment obtained by a man's own exertions. "The necessary incentive to men employed upon relief works to quit those works," the Select Committee of 1896 had

reported, "may best be secured by an arrangement under which the hours of labour on Relief Works would be considerably shorter than the ordinary working hours." But short hours were inconvenient to dovetail into the ordinary work of the Municipality; it was more practicable to let each man work the full hours for one, two, or three days in the week, and it was urged that this would enable him to search for more continuous or more lucrative service on the other days. Thus, the St. Pancras Borough Council in 1903 took on its extra hands "at three days a week, so as to diffuse the benefit as widely as possible, and to enable some of the workers to get employment on the other three days elsewhere, either in permanent, or in more continuous, or in more lucrative service." The Paddington Borough Council in 1905 authorised its Surveyor "to employ an average of twenty men per week, week on and week off. This method would enable about forty men to be employed, instead of twenty being engaged continuously; and it is hoped that, during the alternate week . . . the men would endeavour to find permanent employment elsewhere." These reasons for discontinuous employment chimed in with the very natural desire of the Local Authority to relieve as many of the Unemployed as they could from a given expenditure out of the rates. It coincided also with the constant demand by deputations of Unemployed persons that there should be no favouritism on the part of the Foreman, and that they should all share alike. The usual procedure was, in fact, as we were informed by a witness before the Commission, "unemployed men were allowed to register their names at the various depôts of the Borough Council; each man then received two days' work in rotation." "The conditions of employment," state our Investigators, with regard to one Borough, "were laid down on the same lines as in the previous year; the length of time that each man was to be employed was left to the discretion of the Borough Engineer. It was subsequently fixed at two or three days, with the chance of another two days when the whole list of applicants had been exhausted." At Bethnal Green the Surveyor reports that :—

Complaint was made that by giving three days a week to each man employed, those who had registered their names recently would be a long while before obtaining employment, so the time was altered to two days each man, and finally the system of one day was adopted. I have no hesitation in saying that the one day system was the most satisfactory, as by it, whatever casual labour the Vestry had to distribute was equally distributed amongst all who applied.

The Chelsea Borough Council went so far in 1903 as to direct the Surveyor to engage even the watchmen only for three days per week per man, so that a larger number might be employed, at the same time raising the rate from 3s. 6d. to 4s. per night. At Sunderland, three gangs of men, at first engaged for three days a week, were presently reduced to three days a fortnight.

The twenty years' experience of Municipal Employment gradually revealed to all concerned some disquieting characteristics of this method of providing for able-bodied men in distress through lack of work. The first objection—one which appealed most strongly to the members of the Municipal Authority—was the excessive cost of these additional works even if they were assumed to be necessary or of real utility to the community. This excessive cost was most marked when the system of rotation of employment was adhered to. "I should say," we were told by the Borough Surveyor of Poplar, "that under the three days' system the labour cost 100 per cent more than it should have done, whereas I estimate that in work [for the Unemployed] extending over two or three months, the manual labour did not cost above 15 per cent in excess." "Large bodies of men were employed . . . in reconstructing roads," we were informed by the Borough Surveyor of Bermondsey, "for a term of three days apiece. The result of this was that the work came out very expensive, owing to the fact that the men were not used to the class of work and, when the third day had arrived, they were stopped to make room for the fresh men, which was just about the time they had become acquainted with the use of the tools." The works done by the Unemployed for the Poplar Borough Council in 1903-4—3300 men being given one "three day turn" in the course of the

reported, "may best be secured by an arrangement under which the hours of labour on Relief Works would be considerably shorter than the ordinary working hours." But short hours were inconvenient to dovetail into the ordinary work of the Municipality; it was more practicable to let each man work the full hours for one, two, or three days in the week, and it was urged that this would enable him to search for more continuous or more lucrative service on the other days. Thus, the St. Pancras Borough Council in 1903 took on its extra hands "at three days a week, so as to diffuse the benefit as widely as possible, and to enable some of the workers to get employment on the other three days elsewhere, either in permanent, or in more continuous, or in more lucrative service." The Paddington Borough Council in 1905 authorised its Surveyor "to employ an average of twenty men per week, week on and week off. This method would enable about forty men to be employed, instead of twenty being engaged continuously; and it is hoped that, during the alternate week . . . the men would endeavour to find permanent employment elsewhere." These reasons for discontinuous employment chimed in with the very natural desire of the Local Authority to relieve as many of the Unemployed as they could from a given expenditure out of the rates. It coincided also with the constant demand by deputations of Unemployed persons that there should be no favouritism on the part of the Foreman, and that they should all share alike. The usual procedure was, in fact, as we were informed by a witness before the Commission, "unemployed men were allowed to register their names at the various depôts of the Borough Council; each man then received two days' work in rotation." "The conditions of employment," state our Investigators, with regard to one Borough, "were laid down on the same lines as in the previous year; the length of time that each man was to be employed was left to the discretion of the Borough Engineer. It was subsequently fixed at two or three days, with the chance of another two days when the whole list of applicants had been exhausted." At Bethnal Green the Surveyor reports that :—

are now in the time of the year when work is most abundant."

It was not as if this excess of expenditure all went in wages to the Unemployed. To a large extent it was wasted by an uneconomic use of plant and material, and in the excessive supervision required. "No one having a piece of work 'in hand,'" remarked the General Purposes Committee of the Birmingham Town Council, "would willingly employ workmen who are unaccustomed to the particular work; and here one of the great difficulties of charitable employment arises. The Unemployed, as statistics will show, are usually men of the most varied occupations; and it may fairly be presumed that some of them are not the most thrifty, thoughtful workmen, or men particularly handy at their respective trades. To put a number of ill-assorted workmen of this kind upon any public work would be fatal to its proper execution. In many cases the men would be physically unequal to the task, and in all they would require *an amount of supervision quite incommensurate with any advantage that might be obtained from lower wages.*" It is often forgotten that, in all constructional works, a large outlay has to be made for materials and plant. "*For every day's wages paid to the workmen, twice as much has to be expended in the hire of carts and horses.*" In certain works of wood-paving executed by the Islington Borough Council, several years before they were likely to be required in the ordinary way, the total cost was estimated at £11,389, out of which only £2479 was to be paid in wages for the labour of the Unemployed. "In order to provide employment," as the Finance Committee warned the Paddington Borough Council, "large sums have to be expended on materials, so that of the large expenditure rendered necessary, only a relatively small proportion reaches the men themselves by way of wages. *It would really be cheaper to the rate-payers who have to find the money in any case, if relief were given to the men themselves direct.*"

And the advantage to the workmen themselves, of using the available funds to set going Municipal works, instead of giving it straight to the Unemployed in some

other form, became gradually more than doubtful. To the Borough Councillors who were interested in Labour it became increasingly apparent that these doles of work from Municipal Authorities were being, to a large extent, extracted out of the employment and the wages which would otherwise have been afforded to an enlarged permanent staff, or, in some cases, to the usual employees of the Corporation. "The season when want of employment is most felt," observed the General Purposes Committee of the Birmingham Town Council, "is generally the winter; and what is to become of the regular Corporation workmen if numbers of the unemployed are taken on during precisely that season of the year when the least amount of outdoor work can be done?" By "additional works in the way of street-paving," reported the Master of the Works to the Glasgow Town Council, "employment could be given to a hundred or so"; but this simply means that "Contractors would dismiss their employees." Nor was this objection founded merely on theory. "The effect" of the Municipal Relief Works at Bradford, deposed to us the Deputy City Surveyor, "was to reduce the amount of work which would have been done by the labourers usually employed by the Corporation, and as a matter of fact some of the regular Corporation labourers were walking about the streets of Bradford, out of work, at the time when these works were in progress, as they declined to register their names at the labour bureau."

Thus, the relief of the Unemployed by means of Municipal Works was proved to be, to no small extent at any rate, merely an arrangement by which some men were deprived of their regular employment, in order that other men might be given, in rotation, a "three days' turn"! The Unemployed thus taken on were certainly no better than those whom they displaced. As was sometimes naïvely admitted, those to whom this preferential position was given were, almost inevitably, less efficient workmen. "A representation having been made by the Board of Guardians," we read in the Report of the Poplar Board of Works, "that, in the struggle to obtain employment, the weakest probably went to the wall, an arrangement was

made by which men, to whom letters of recommendation were given by the Relieving Officers, secured priority when Labour was engaged." "There are many old men and weakly young men, and others not used to hard manual labour," we are told, "who seek employment at such times. . . . The greater number of the men recommended were physically unfit, some being exceptionally unfit, and others being weak through want of food. One-fifth to one-third of the men were equal to the Council's regular employees." The Camberwell Surveyor stated that, in the case of some excavating work, "on account of the want of stamina of the Unemployed the Vestry's workmen were taken from their scavenging and were put on to harder work, thus making room for the Unemployed." What is more serious is that by this costly system of giving preference to the unfit, work could not fail to fall, to some extent, into the hands of ill-conducted as well as unfit persons. "Among those employed," states the Borough Engineer of West Ham in 1894, "were occasionally some loafers and idlers, rather more 'hard up' than usual." Even when these refused to stand four successive days' work, and were dismissed for misconduct, or for failure to keep time, they had enjoyed the benefit of the day's wages, to the exclusion of others more deserving.

Nor was the kind of work that was offered by the Municipal Authorities, whether to the skilled mechanic temporarily out of employment, to the clerk who had lost his place, or to the painter or building trades' labourer, such an occupation as improved him either mentally or morally. It was doubtless better for all these men to be at work at anything, even if only for a "three days' turn," rather than deteriorate by idleness. The worst kind of Municipal Employment was found to improve the man who had been a long time out of work. But compared with other occupations, or other training, the unskilled labouring, which alone could be provided for a heterogeneous body of applicants, was non-educational and depressing. "Road-picking," says a Borough Surveyor, "is trying for the unaccustomed . . . blistered hands tell against good averages, where the men are taken

promiscuously. "There was much talk," we were told by a witness, "of white-washing railway arches, laying out recreation grounds, painting town halls; but it was soon found that such work is subject to very narrow limitations, and the usual work was 'broom and shovel.'" Even this work gave out, and Municipal ingenuity—hampered by the inability to take land in private ownership, or to find room for much "ground work" in a crowded city, and still more by the heavy cost involved for materials, supervision, etc.—could find no more tasks on which to put the Unemployed. Many Municipal Authorities were accordingly driven to fall back on stone-breaking for road metal. "The only arrangements we have in dealing with the Unemployed," reports a Local Government Board Inspector, "is by sending all able-bodied applicants to the Corporation stoneyard, where stone-breaking is provided at 2s. 6d. per ton." "I have considered the question," reported the Master of Works at Glasgow, "so far as my department is concerned, and do not see that any great amount of employment can be provided through this department, unless it may be in the way of stone-breaking. If the Committee should determine to go on with this class of work, it should be, I think, on the footing of payment for work done only, and the basis of payment should be at the rate paid to the regular stone-breakers. The Committee will also keep in view that, *if they go in for an extensive system of stone-breaking, the contractors from whom we purchase metal will pay off a number of their men*, seeing they will not be able to get a market for the sale of metal." Notwithstanding the plain warning conveyed in the latter sentence, the Glasgow Town Council "agreed to continue the Relief Work to a limited number of men at stone-breaking, to be paid by piece-work," and the same plan was, in despair, adopted by various other Authorities. This monotonous and toilsome work, uneducational and brutalising even to the unskilled labourer, was found to be seriously deteriorating to the unemployed clerk or skilled artisan, and was bitterly resented by them as degrading. But even in the most suitable of occupations, the atmosphere of Municipal

Works, *whenever men are taken on because they are Unemployed*, and are not picked out and engaged at wages in the ordinary way because they are the best available men to execute a task that is required for its own sake, was invariably found to be enervating and demoralising. It is not in human nature to put forth one's full strength in work which is different from that to which one has been accustomed, and which is known to have been artificially created more as a means of occupying the men than for its urgency; in an employment, moreover, from which dismissal is practically impossible. Those who attempted to work at their full strength and their full speed were dissuaded from doing so. "Decent men, willing and wishful for work," it was reported, "are even intimidated and prevented from doing their best by those with whom they must work. Several cases came to our knowledge last year where men were threatened for doing more than the 'professional' Unemployed thought was sufficient." In trying to utilise the labour of the Unemployed the Borough Surveyor, accustomed to deal with ordinary workmen on a purely business footing, finds himself turned into an instructor of the unskilled, and into a superintendent of a reformatory institution. "The fact has been forced on me," states the Newcastle Surveyor, "much against my will, that the providing of work for the Unemployed by the Corporation is a wasteful way of doing it. We have not an organisation that can cope with the 'professional' Relief-Labour man." "Foremen or gangers," as was expressly pointed out to us by Mr. Walter Long, "whose business it was to superintend the work, while fully capable of getting full value out of able-bodied and capable workmen, had no experience of dealing with men who, through want or physical infirmity, were not able to give a full day's work in return for the wages paid." And the foremen, conscious that the work had no commercial basis, were found sometimes to be themselves slack, and unwilling to bring their jobs to an end.

All these objections to the relief of the Unemployed by means of Municipal Employment—cumulative in their force—still leave unstated what seems to us the

most fundamental of all. In the following chapter on "The distress from Unemployment as it exists To-day," we shall show that the problem before the country is only in exceptional circumstances and only to a small extent that of providing for the man who has temporarily fallen out of continuous employment at weekly wages, and who has to be tided over the interval between one such regular situation and the next one. Such a man would present, as we shall see, comparatively little difficulty if he stood by himself. What is more formidable is the fact that large sections of the population in most of the big cities are in a chronic state of under-employment, in which they get only a few days' work per week, and in bad times only a few days' work per month.

The provision of employment at irregular intervals and for irregular periods by Municipal Authorities, especially if it is arranged for times of more than usual Under-employment, tends to perpetuate this evil condition and to enlarge its area. This has been observed by one person after another. "The relief work with which they are provided," we are told in the Board of Trade Report of 1893, "is to many of them merely one out of the series of casual jobs by which they are accustomed to live, and when it is over they are in the same position as when it began. They have been supported for a few days, but they have not been on their feet." "The worst of these relief works *is-breaks* Mr. C. S. Loch, "that after they are over, the families are just where they were; they get the employment for the winter, a few months, and then, unless they have it next winter and the winter after, they remain in the same position; but, on the other hand, one has done this injury, drawn a large number of comparatively young men on to a relief system. Now those men ought not to want to come, we ought to do our best to keep them from coming; but it was quite startling how many of them were quite young men; they did not belong to trade societies; they were labourers living in a happy-go-lucky sort of way, and sometimes they were married and had young children, and sometimes they had not a strong physique." Summing

up the results of fifteen years' more experience, our own Investigators report that "the best that the relief works have accomplished has been to provide another—generally inconsiderable—odd job to honest men who have to live by odd jobs, because of the irregularity of so much of our industry." And the Board of Trade in 1893 gave the warning that "against the advantages of all schemes for providing work for the Unemployed must be set the grave danger of their tendency to become chronic and to be looked forward to and counted on every winter." It is needless to add that the anticipated result actually happened. "Before long," we were told by one of our witnesses, "'a day from the Vestry' came to be looked upon as a matter of right and its refusal as an injustice. Crowds gathered round the Vestry every winter waiting for work. . . . At a meeting of the Vestry in 1895 a young man complained that 'he had been up every day for ten weeks, but had not been taken on once,' and he was one of many. . . . A generation has grown up which has learnt to look upon these doles as a right."

Looking back on the whole twenty years' experience of the provision of Municipal Employment, it is fundamentally to this existence of large sections of the working-class population at all times in a state of chronic Under-employment that must be attributed the failure of Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion of using Local Authorities to tide over periods of exceptional distress. If Able-bodied Destitution were limited to men, whether skilled or unskilled, who had lost definite situations, and might reasonably be expected to get into definite situations again when the emergency had passed away—whether their loss of employment was due to some such catastrophe as the bankruptcy of an employer or a fire, or to some dislocation through war or a commercial crisis—Municipal works would be a feasible way of getting over the difficulty. This course was successfully pursued in Lancashire at the time of the Cotton Famine. A few of the skilled cotton operatives could be employed at the current wages of unskilled men at public works without disinclining them to take up their old occupation as soon

as the mills were reopened. This outdoor work seems, in fact, to have served as a sort of physical training and to have actually benefited the health of many of those who were accustomed to the confinement of a mill. But even here it was found necessary to supersede the ordinary machinery of the Local Authority by carefully-devised organisation under specialised management, by which, at the cost of heavy loans charged upon the local rates, a limited number (never more than 4000) of the unemployed cotton-spinners—not the labourers—were carefully combined with a large number of ordinary workmen, accustomed to the work of sewerage, paving and street improvements, engaged in the ordinary way, and many of them brought from a distance. This Lancashire experiment, which is frequently cited in support of the Municipal Employment of the Unemployed, was, compared with the operations of the Municipal Authorities of the past twenty years, a relatively small affair. Its very success—so far as it can be considered a success—confirms the reason that we have assigned for the failure of Municipal Employment as a means of providing for the crowds that assail the Distress Committees of to-day. It was not the men living on casual employment in the Lancashire towns, it was not the general labourers, it was not even the labourers in the building trades for whom the Municipal Employment was found in 1863-66. For the distress into which tens of thousands of these men were thrown, their chronic condition of Under-employment being aggravated as an indirect result of the Cotton Famine, provision was made by huge charitable funds, by soup kitchens and by the Poor Law. It was exactly because the Municipal Works organised by Sir R. Rawlinson were carefully confined, so far as concerned the “Employment of the Unemployed,” to the engagement of a limited number of cotton-spinners, for whom it was known that situations in the cotton mills would be available as soon as the importation of cotton was resumed, that this small and costly experiment can be said to have been successful. *If adequate provision were made in some other way for the casual labourers in chronic Under-employment, it*

is conceivable that the Municipal Authorities might successfully find work for the limited number of men whom some industrial dislocation had temporarily deprived of regular situations, and who needed only to be tided over until they got into regular situations again. Even then, the question arises whether, if financial considerations alone were regarded, it would not be found to be cheaper to give the men their wages without allowing them to spoil the material, wastefully use the plant, and necessitate the engagement of foremen and overlookers, for the execution of work, possibly not undesirable in itself, but of no real commercial value. In short, we are obliged to conclude, with the committee of the Norwich Town Council, that "the work on the whole has been unsatisfactory, and the payments in some cases are scarcely worth calling payments for work, but merely a mask for charity."

(B) *The Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905.*

An appreciation of the gravity of the evil of this unco-ordinated and unregulated "employment relief" by Municipal Authorities—more especially the chronic "employment relief" of the Metropolitan Boroughs—led, in the autumn of 1903, a little group of experienced organisers and administrators of charitable funds to form a Committee and raise a Mansion House fund in order to organise work on a better system for the destitute Unemployed of four East End Boroughs (Stepney, Poplar, Bethnal Green, and Shoreditch). This Committee proceeded on the lines of systematic investigation into the industrial status of each applicant, in order to select, not men of good character only, but those who were usually in settled employment in a definite situation and had a clear prospect of returning to it. It also started the colony system of combining employment with training which we shall presently describe. But the main effect of the Mansion House Fund, in 1903-4 was "to demonstrate the magnitude of the problem to be solved." The situation had become one of some gravity. As Mr. Walter Long, then President of the Local Government Board, informed us:—

"There were crowds besieging the offices of the Relieving Officers and Boards of Guardians in London, in Leeds, in Liverpool, in Manchester, in Birmingham, and all our great cities where the unemployed difficulty arose in an acute form; the Boards of Guardians could hardly sit in some places without safeguarding their doors, which were besieged by a crowd of people demanding assistance. In the same way when it was found that the relief given by the Guardians brought in its train pauperism and deprivation of all civil rights, they turned their attention to the Municipalities, and demanded that great works should be carried out by the Municipalities on which they should be employed."

Mr. Long dealt first with London. By his efforts an organisation to work on the lines laid down by the Mansion House Committee was, in the autumn of 1904, extended to every part of London. In each Metropolitan Borough a Joint Committee was formed, composed of representatives of the Borough Council and of the local Board of Guardians, in some cases with experienced charity workers, to undertake the local registration and inquiry. A Central Committee, composed partly of representatives of the Local Joint Committees and of the London County Council, and partly of persons nominated by the Local Government Board, was to administer whatever funds could be obtained, in carefully devised schemes for assistance. This semi-official organisation, called into existence by the President of the Local Government Board without statutory authority, was definitely established under the name of "Distress Committee" for all the towns of the United Kingdom by the Unemployed Workmen Act, introduced in 1905 by Mr. Gerald Balfour, who had meanwhile succeeded Mr. Long at the Local Government Board.

The Unemployed Workmen Act embodied the policy of Mr. Chamberlain's Circular of 1886—that respectable men, temporarily unemployed, should not be cast on the Poor Law, but should be assisted by the Municipal Authority of the district in which they were resident. The casual labourers were expressly excluded. "We proposed," said Mr. Gerald Balfour, "to deal with the *élite* of the Unemployed." "The relief of recurrent distress," he stated in introducing the Bill, "was not contemplated. . . . The Unemployed for whom the Bill was intended were respect-

able workmen, settled in a locality, hitherto accustomed to regular work, but temporarily out of employment through circumstances beyond their control; capable workmen with hope of return to regular work after tiding over a period of temporary distress." By authoritative rules laid down by the Local Government Board, no man who had received Poor Relief during the preceding twelve months could be helped, nor yet any one who had twice previously been helped by the new authorities. But there were other provisions and wider implications and larger aims embodied in Mr. Gerald Balfour's Act than might have been inferred from the precedents of 1886-1904. The Unemployed Workmen Act set up, for the first time, Public Authorities, able to draw on the rates for their expenses, expressly charged to deal with the social disease of Unemployment. The powers of these Distress Committees, which were to rise up in all large towns throughout the Kingdom, were not limited to the provision, out of voluntary funds, of work at wages for men temporarily out of employment. They were also empowered to pay the cost of the migration of men and their families to different parts of the United Kingdom or their emigration; to establish Farm Colonies, and to start an organised system of registration of employers wanting workers and workers wanting work within their districts. This last function of ascertaining the exact conditions of the Labour Market in every part of the Kingdom was especially insisted on. Whereas the establishment of a Distress Committee was to take place only in those towns in which it was deemed to be necessary, every County and County Borough Council in England and Wales was specifically required, if no Distress Committee was established, to appoint a Special Committee to ascertain, by means of continuous investigation, and the working of Labour Exchanges, what exactly were the openings for employment within their respective areas. "The object of the Act," Mr. Walter Long informed us, "was to provide machinery by which those who were able to work could get work by legitimate means."

(c) *The Distress Committees*

The new organisation got rapidly to work. Besides the Metropolis, where the voluntary machinery set up by Mr. Long was converted into the new statutory Authority with which we shall deal separately, nearly a hundred towns in the United Kingdom at once started Distress Committees, and began to register applicants for assistance.

In the Provincial Boroughs, with insignificant exceptions, the Distress Committees had no other idea than a continuance of the policy of Municipal employment, which, as we have described, had been spasmodically carried out, here and there, during the preceding twenty years. The "Labour Bureau" or "Labour Register" set up under the Act has been, in nearly every town outside the Metropolis, practically only a means of registering the applicants for the "Employment Relief" dispensed by the Distress Committee. Only the smallest use has, except in West Ham and two or three other places, been made in these towns of the powers of assisting migration or emigration. What has happened is that the provision of doles of work by the Municipal Authorities has received a great extension, and has become chronic. The simple device of anticipating works of paving, sewerage, and road-making, so as to begin them in the winter, before they were required, has been adopted more widely than ever. A certain ingenuity has been shown in inventing special jobs on which to set the Unemployed at work—reclaiming part of Chat Moss, planting trees in the water-catchment area at Leeds, foreshore reclamation at Bristol, potato-growing at Oldham and Croydon, forming new recreation grounds or cleaning watercourses in many towns. Viewed as a whole, these provincial examples of Municipal Employment under the Distress Committees between 1905 and the present time present exactly the same characteristics as those which were undertaken in response to the successive Circulars of the Local Government Board between 1886 and 1905. We see the same provision of work at the ordinary rate of Wages, not afforded continuously to any man, but only for a few days in the

week, or a week or two in the course of the winter. We see the same swamping of the lists of applicants, by men who are at no time more than intermittently employed, whether these are dock or wharf or general labourers, or painters and builders' labourers, and who are glad at any season to present themselves for odd days of work at current rates. We see the same excessive cost of every work in which accurate comparison can be made—an excess due partly to the inevitable inefficiency of the Unemployed men at the work to which they were set, but chiefly to the difficulties inherent in working with heterogeneous gangs of men, few of whom were putting forth a full strike, and some of whom were bent on doing only "as much as they were paid for." We see the same considerable expenditure, apart from the wages to the Unemployed, on the necessary materials, plant and supervision, so that it would often have been cheaper, financially, to have given the wages to the men merely as relief. Finally, we see the same inevitable tendency to a shrinkage of the ordinary staffs of the Municipal Departments, and to a throwing-out of employment of the regular hands of the Municipal Contractors, because the "ground work" on which they would have been employed in the ordinary course had been given to the Distress Committee, to be distributed in doles of "Employment Relief" to those who had put down their names as unemployed. The Local Authorities, indeed, have been suspected of deliberately throwing the cost of their own projected works on the grant from the Exchequer for the Unemployed. In short, we are, by this experience of the provincial towns, forced to agree with the conclusion of our Investigators. "Municipal Relief Works," they report, "have been in operation for twenty years, and must, we think, be pronounced a complete failure—a failure accentuated by the attempt to organise them by the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905. The evidence we have collected seems conclusive that relief works are economically useless. Either ordinary work is undertaken, in which case it is merely forestalled, and, later, throws out of employment the men, who are in the more or less

regular employ of the councils, or else it is sham work which we believe to be even more deteriorating than direct relief."

So far as the mere provision of employment is concerned, we do not think that the three years' experience of the Metropolis under the Unemployed Workmen Act points to any different conclusion from that to which all those who have examined the working of Municipal Employment have been driven. In London the work of inquiring into and sifting out the applicants seems to have been more systematically performed by the Distress Committees than in most provincial towns. Moreover the Central (Unemployed) Body, by which the selected men have been dealt with, set itself from the outset against the policy of sharing out the work in small doles, so that those men who have been employed at all have usually had work continuously for several weeks or even for several months at a time, the short week of forty-three hours at 6d. per hour being substituted for the device of a "three days' turn" which has elsewhere been so common. But the Central (Unemployed) Body, with its twenty-nine subordinate Distress Committees, has distinguished itself, not so much by the "Employment Relief" which it has organised, for this has not differed essentially from what has been done elsewhere, and from what had been done spasmodically in London for the preceding twenty years, but for the energy and capacity with which it has developed the other ideas embodied in the Unemployed Workmen Act. It has been the three new functions of the Unemployed Workmen Act, the establishment of Rural Colonies, the organisation of Labour Exchanges, and the removal of Workmen to places where their labour was required, which have proved the most valuable fruits of this development of Mr. Chamberlain's policy of withdrawing the Unemployed from the Poor Law.

(D) *Rural Colonies*

"The main feature of the scheme of the Mansion House Committee" of 1903-4, a scheme inherited by the

Central (Unemployed) Body for London, "was the provision of continuous work for male heads of families, the men being boarded and lodged and employed in Rural Colonies, while an allowance was paid to the families in London on a scale based on the number of children, and averaging 14s. 6d. a week. The men were allowed to return home on furlough at regular intervals to visit their families and look for work." This idea of Rural Colonies was, from the first, a leading feature of the work of the Central Executive Committee of the London Unemployed Fund, which Mr. Long had started, and it became, from the outset, the principal development in London under the Unemployed Workmen Act. Under this scheme several hundreds of men were sent each winter, for periods of from four to seventeen weeks, to execute works of land reclamation, digging and excavating and road-making, principally at Osea Island, Letchworth and Farnbridge. At the outset, it was intended to limit engagements to men who had been in regular employment, and who hoped to get back to definite situations at weekly wages, to the exclusion of the mere day labourer. The idea of the Rural Colony seems to have been principally to afford an automatic "test," it being assumed that the removal from London, the separation from family and associates, and the monotony of daily work in the country, remote from congenial society, would stave off those who are attracted to Municipal Relief Works merely by the prospect of an easy job, at regular if somewhat low remuneration. This, it will be observed, is, in one respect, a "test" of a different order from that of admission to the General Mixed Workhouse. The essential weakness of the "Workhouse Test" is that it deters by means of the very regimen to which the inmates of the institution are subjected; it therefore operates principally on those who have "passed the test," and have been admitted. Its efficacy is dependent on the deterrent regimen being continued. The Rural Colony, on the other hand, deters by means of the dislike which the undesirable man has to leaving the congenial surroundings to which he has grown accustomed; its

operation is, therefore, only on those whom it excludes. In so far as the necessity of moving into the country proved to serve as an effective "Test," it offered the advantage of allowing the regimen at the Rural Colony to be free from any features of humiliation, degradation, or penal conditions. Those who "passed the test" could safely be treated in whatever manner was best for their well-being.

Apart from minor shortcomings, which were remedied by experience, the main objection to these first experiments in Rural Colonies was their unexpected costliness. It had been assumed that these carefully selected men, put to work at useful tasks, would produce, at any rate, some considerable proportion of their maintenance. The result proved quite the reverse. The conduct of the men was, on the whole, good; and the majority of them seem honestly to have worked. But, including the allowances to their families in London, they cost, on an average, about 25s. per week each. The average output per man was not, as it could hardly have been expected to be, equal to that of the ordinary contractor's gang. The expense of supervision and skilled organisation and direction of their labour was necessarily heavy. The kind of work that could be undertaken in the winter months by heterogeneous gangs of unskilled labourers aggregated in large numbers, and constantly coming and going, was not such as offered any profitable return, even if undertaken under competitive conditions. We need not debit the enterprise with the specially unfortunate result of the work at Fambridge, where a speculative job in building a seawall, in order to reclaim some land which had been submerged by an eruption of the sea, proved financially disastrous, just as it might easily have done to a contractor. In this case there was also the profit, which cannot be computed, of protecting other land from possible damage. The typical case is perhaps that of Osea Island, where a public-spirited landowner offered the use of land, buildings, materials and plant on advantageous terms, involving no capital outlay; and himself managed the housing and feeding of the men at an inclusive charge. The operations of seawall repairing, roadmaking and trench-

ing at Osea Island cost £1770, apart from the provision of buildings, materials and plant, "the value of the work done being estimated at £530," by the independent valuer, and the actual recoupment being only £265, the balance going to the owner of the land according to agreement, in part return for the buildings, materials and plant provided by him. Thus, 134 men, working on an average for nine weeks each, had received for themselves and their families the equivalent of about 25s. a week each, their gross product being only equal to about 8s. 2d. a week each, and this sum being more than absorbed by the cost of materials, plant and buildings, and incidental expenses. It would have been almost exactly as cheap to the Central (Unemployed) Body to have paid the 134 men 25s. a week each for doing nothing in London. The work at Letchworth resulted in somewhat better financial results. Its gross cost was £5882, and £2091 was actually received in return. The 422 men had, on an average, slightly over ten weeks' employment; and the gross product was 9s. 8d. per week, from which 2s. 4d. per week must be deducted for the expenses of supervision, plant, etc. The men earned, therefore, 7s. 4d. per week each towards their cost of about 25s. per week. Other enterprises yielded essentially similar results. We may, perhaps, infer that the employment of a few hundred carefully selected men in Rural Colonies, when work can be found for them, has been proved to cost from 17s. to 25s. each per week, which can only be said to be less than the men and their families would have cost in the General Mixed Workhouse.

But the financial results are not, in themselves, decisive. The men and their families had to be maintained somehow; and whilst they cost less in the Rural Colonies than in the General Mixed Workhouse, there is universal testimony that the results were enormously superior. The Colony served, on the whole, as a "Test" of just the right sort. It did not dispense with the need for careful inquiry and selection of men. But it choked off the drinker, the loafer, the "work-shy," and the semi-criminal "cadger"; whilst the honest and respectable man, though refusing to leave his home whilst he had any alternative, gladly

accepted the offer, if he was in real distress, for the sake of the regular subsistence secured to his wife and family. And those men who "passed the test" were benefited, not, as in the General Mixed Workhouse, deteriorated, by what was done for them. It was true that, mainly owing to the conditions under which it had been done, their work yielded little or nothing of money value. But they gained in health and strength by their stay in the country, with adequate food, regular hours and enforced abstinence from stimulants. They gained, too, usually in character and, in the best instances, perhaps also in *morale* from the regular work, the sense of co-operation in enterprise, and the absence of degrading or humiliating accompaniments. Many of them gained, also, even at the necessarily un-educational work to which they were put, something in the way of physical and mental training; and it was along this last line that the experiment of Rural Colonies was further developed.

The other form taken by the Rural Colony was that of the Farm or Agricultural Training Establishment. By the public-spirited action of Mr. Joseph Fels, the land and buildings at Hollesley Bay, which had been specially adapted and used as an Agricultural College, were secured for the public and placed at the disposal, first of the Central Committee for the experiments contemplated under Mr. Long's scheme, and then of the Central (Unemployed) Body. On the 1300 acres of this estate, including not only arable land and pasture, but also extensive gardens, orchards, dairy and poultry farms, much heath for bringing into cultivation, and a brickfield, it was proposed to combine three different purposes, namely:—

(i.) "The provision of special work for periods of exceptional distress," the men being employed at improving the estate and "double-digging" for the planting of fruit trees;

(ii.) "The provision of more continuous work for men who . . . show a marked aptitude for country life," these selected men being trained "for permanent work in the country as gardeners or farm labourers"; and

(iii.) "The establishment of suitable men and families in agricultural or other rural industry," whether in farm or market-garden situations at wages, by the establishment of small holdings, or by emigration, for which special training was to be afforded.

To the Farm Colony thus established with the approval of the Local Government Board of 1905, the twenty-nine Distress Committees in the Metropolitan Boroughs have been authorised to send, from among the local "Unemployed," selected married men of good character, choosing primarily those who expressed a desire to be trained for agriculture or to emigrate. The wives and families received the weekly allowance that we have already described, the men themselves getting at the Colony only their board and lodging and sixpence a week for pocket money. Every month they were allowed two days' furlough, their railway fares being paid, in order to visit their homes and look for work. They could, of course, leave the Colony at any moment, receiving their railway tickets to London, and the allowance to their families being stopped after the current week. In the course of the four years that this Farm Colony has been in operation, over 3000 men have been admitted and discharged, the average stay being 11.5 weeks. Of this number about 174 (with 700 dependents) have been emigrated, along with their families; 42 (with 183 dependents) have been assisted to migrate to country situations elsewhere; and 495 have taken their discharge on having obtained work, these "known cases" being only a part of the total who have found work. The remainder of the men, comprising three-fourths of the whole, were either returned to London on the completion of the maximum stay allowed, or left prematurely on one ground or another, without anything being known of their having got into situations.

The actual cost of the experiment cannot easily be calculated, because it is impossible to decide by what amount the commercial value of the estate has been increased by the various works that have been executed, the large extensions of the market-garden and fruit orchards

that have been made, and the other improvements that have been effected, all of which are of the nature of capital outlay. The actual amount by which the Central (Unemployed) Body, and its predecessor, the Central Executive Committee, are out of pocket, down to September 30th, 1908, including the purchase of the estate and cottages (£33,000), and all the improvements, as well as the maintenance of the men and all expenses, has been (less recoupments from sales of produce, etc.) £111,573. Against this there is to be set the undoubted great improvement of a freehold estate of 1300 acres. What is more certain is that, including the family allowances, and between 5s. and 6s. per week for food, the men cost, on an average, with railway fares, supervision and incidental expenses, something like 25s. to 30s. a week each.

The Hollesley Bay Farm Colony, started with such wide and varied objects, has become the subject of some controversy. To us, surveying the whole course of the experiment, two factors seem to have militated against its complete success, namely, the mixture of aims with which the undertaking was started, and the peremptory extinction of the project which had afforded the stimulus of hope indispensable to the success of any social experiment. The mixture of aims interfered, from the outset, with the single-mindedness of the organisation. The Colony was devised primarily as a training establishment; but it was made to serve also as a place where hundreds of men could be provided merely with employment, which it was hoped would be productive of profit. To some members of the governing body, the main purpose of the Colony was the training afforded. To others, its chief value seemed the opportunity of finding productive employment for the Unemployed. To others, again, it seemed a stage towards the settlement upon the land of a selected number of men trained for the purpose. The Distress Committees, whilst selecting, on the whole, respectable men of decent conduct, failed to find enough men who wished to be trained for agriculture, or for emigration, and were tempted to fill up all the available places by dispatching the best of the men who, on finding no other alternative open to them,

would consent to go. The idea of conning admission to the Rural Colony to men who had held regular situations, and might hope to regain such, was quickly abandoned, largely because the Distress Committees had little or nothing else to offer to the crowd of casual dock or general labourers and building trades' labourers, who made up three-fourths of the applicants. Thus, the bulk of the men sent to the Colony were men who did not want to be trained in agriculture, who resented the idea, and who looked upon their engagement merely as one of employment away from their homes in a remote country place, at the severe task of "double-digging" in cold weather, for wages which they described as "a penny a day." The unfortunate Superintendent of the Colony would find scores of such men arriving—sometimes as many as eighty in a single day—who were sore at what seemed to them unnecessary exile, who had no wish to be taught anything, and for whom, whatever the weather, work had to be found. We think that it is no little testimony to the advantageous circumstances of the Hollesley Bay Estate, to the patience, skill and administrative capacity of the Superintendent, and to the practical wisdom with which, on the whole, the enterprise has been conducted, that, under all these disadvantages, the cost has been kept down to so low a figure, the men have gained so much advantage, and the discipline of the establishment has been so well maintained. But from the stand-point of affording productive employment there can be little doubt that the Hollesley Bay experiment has been open to the criticisms that have been made on other forms of Municipal work for the Unemployed. Its sole merits, from this stand-point, are that, unlike Municipal Relief Works, it has served as the right sort of Test, and that it has provided those who passed the Test with healthy maintenance and a task of work in the open air of the country, without degrading accompaniments, instead of in a London Workhouse or Labour Yard.

From the stand-point of affording training to those men who wished to engage in agricultural pursuits in England or the Colonies, the Hollesley Bay Colony must

be counted a success. The varied and practical character of the instruction provided appears to be just what is required for the would-be emigrant or small-holder; and, moreover, the training has, in fact, enabled a certain number of men to obtain permanent situations in this country. But the use of the Colony as a Training Establishment has been hampered in various ways. The men themselves seldom got quite free from the idea that they were there for productive employment, and some of them were, for this reason, indisposed to take the training seriously. The use of the Colony as a place upon which some hundreds of the Unemployed could be "dumped," merely in order to be set to work, necessarily absorbed much of the time and zeal of the administrative staff; and diverted the interest and attention of the minority of men who were there for training. Those who, for one reason or another, were not suitable emigrants, looked to finding situations in the country; but the failure to organise any complete system of Labour Exchanges in every County, to which we shall presently refer, made it almost impossible to discover the existence of suitable vacancies. Finally, there came the blow which destroyed the stimulus of hope under which the Colony had worked, in the decision of the Local Government Board in October 1906, that the erection of cottages should be stopped, that no part of the 1300 acres could be set aside for small holdings, and that, in spite of the terms of the Statute, no further expenditure was to be incurred by the Central (Unemployed) Body to assist even the selected men who—to use Mr. Walter Long's own words to us—had "taken advantage of the opportunity offered to them to really learn how to cultivate their land to a profit," and had been specially trained with this object, in establishing them, as intended, on the land, so that they "might become self-supporting citizens."

Our impression of the success and failure of the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony has been confirmed by the results of an investigation, made by one of our number in the spring of 1908, into the after-careers of the 1853 men who had, at that time, passed through the Colony. This inquiry,

conducted by personal visitations of the homes in all the twenty-nine Boroughs of London, had the advantage of being undertaken some time after the earlier batches of men had returned home from the Colony; but this lapse of time, whilst it increased the value of the Report with regard to those men who were found, necessarily involved the loss from sight of a large proportion who were dead (10), not actually found (14), or who had removed without trace (740). Out of the 1089 whose careers were more or less ascertained, 174 had emigrated and were mostly reported to be doing well, and between 40 and 50 had found situations in the country. But the great majority of the men, who were for the most part those sent to the Colony merely for employment, not for training, had had to return to London, and it is the after-careers of these men which are of the greatest significance. From the interesting statistics of the Report made on these cases certain broad features stand out. In more than 90 per cent of the cases the men had been physically benefited by the stay at the Colony. Health and strength, impaired by the privation and mental distress that goes with Unemployment, had usually been restored or improved. In a little over 8 per cent of the cases, it was declared that no such physical benefit had resulted, these being usually cases in which the man had been sent home through illness, or in which delicate men had been unable to stand the exposure. Nearly all the wives spoke highly of the Hollesley Bay Scheme, and found the weekly allowance sufficient to live upon, owing to its regularity. A great many of them said that they and the children were able to live in comfort; but after the man's return, and a few weeks of irregular work, the home had gone back to its normal destitute condition. Only 9 per cent of the wives found it impossible to keep their homes decently on the money allowed them. In one family only was there evidence of the absence of the man causing injury to the home, and in this case the wife ran away whilst her husband was at the Colony. In spite of the extreme poverty everywhere, 63·3 per cent of the homes were reported on as being clean and well kept, 22·4 per cent were fairly clean,

and only 14·3 per cent were dirty. Of the whole 908 men actually visited, 41·4 per cent had not made any application to the Distress Committee or the Poor Law since their return from the Colony. Of the remaining 58·6 per cent, 33·5 per cent had applied to the Distress Committee with no result, 13·7 per cent had applied to the Distress Committee and had temporary work given to them, whilst 11·4 per cent had applied to the Poor Law. It is from the industrial stand-point that the after-careers are least satisfactory. Only in about 10 per cent of the cases had the man succeeded in getting into a regular situation of some permanence, though "fairly regular work" was reported of about 7 per cent more. What appears to be a considerable proportion of those engaged in the Building Trades had obtained fairly continuous work at the usual busy season in the spring, but found themselves unemployed again in the winter. In no fewer than 107 cases, out of 908 men actually visited, *skilled artisans and mechanics—carpenters, compositors, boot-makers, tailors, blacksmiths and engineers among them—had sunk to be general labourers.* Of the men who were simply returned to London, and whom the Central (Unemployed) Body had dropped there, to sink or swim, the great majority had, in fact, found themselves in no way permanently re-established, but once more in the same chronic state of "Under-employment," dividing their time between doing a little casual work and tramping about in a hopeless search for a better job, and quickly becoming, for the most part, in as great need of help as they were a year or two before. In seven cases at least (besides many others among the 740 not traced), the home had been broken up, and the men and their families were in the Workhouse.

It is clear that, however superior may have been the stay at Hollesley Bay to residence in the Workhouse, or to work in the Labour yard, the capital drawback has been that *the great bulk of the men have been allowed to return to, the same demoralising morass of chronic Under-employment from which they were taken.* In these cases no permanent good has been done. But the experiment has not been fully carried out as it was intended. What

Mr. Walter Long thought that he had authorised were "experiments in regard to the deserving applicants, with a view not only to giving them temporary employment, but also . . . to *securing their permanent re-establishment* so that they might become self-supporting citizens in future." As a remedy for the distress due to Unemployment, the Rural Colony falls short, because, under the present policy of the Local Government Board, it stands alone. The Central (Unemployed) Body was definitely informed that the Act was "only intended for the provision of temporary relief." But the Act itself said that the temporary work was to be such as the Local Authority thought "best calculated to put the man in a position to obtain regular work or other means of supporting himself." What is lacking is, as regards the trained and tested men, some appropriate machinery for securing, as was originally contemplated, "their permanent re-establishment."

(E) *The Labour Exchange*

It would be unfair to Mr. Walter Long and Mr. Gerald Balfour not to record that they recognised the necessity for machinery in order to enable the new Employment Authorities that they were setting up to discover exactly where and how the applicants for relief could be permanently re-established in employment. It was part of the provision made by the Unemployed Workmen Act that there should be, in every County and County Borough, an official organisation for ascertaining the local conditions of employment, and this was to take the form of a universal network of Labour Exchanges covering the whole country, which would, when in full working order, show at once in what parts of the country there was any unsatisfied demand for labour. Where a Distress Committee was set up, the conduct of the Labour Exchange was entrusted to it. Wherever no Distress Committee was set up, there was to be a Special Committee appointed by the County or County Borough Council, and expressly directed to fulfil the same function. "The network of Labour Bureaus which the (Unemployed Workmen) Act *was intended to*

establish all over the country" was, in fact, as Mr. Gerald Balfour described it to us, an integral part of the general scheme.

Unfortunately, as it seems to us, this part of the scheme of the Unemployed Workmen Act has, outside the Metropolis, been left practically inoperative. In spite of the mandatory terms of the Act in this respect, we cannot find that these Special Committees were ever appointed in England and Wales, or (except in Lanarkshire, Hamilton and Motherwell) anywhere in Scotland or Ireland, or that any Labour Exchanges were, as the Act required, set up for the large proportion of the country not falling within the jurisdiction of any Distress Committee. Thus, as the Act has actually been administered, Labour Exchanges have been established only in places where Unemployment was so great as to warrant the setting up of a Distress Committee; and where, consequently, they were foredoomed to find it impossible to discover situations for those who registered themselves. In those places at which, in the judgment of the Local Government Board, there was no such pressure of the Unemployed, and where, accordingly, there may have been vacant situations to be filled, no Labour Exchanges have been established. Thus it was that it came about that when the Superintendent of the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony sought to discover vacant situations in country districts for the picked men whom he had trained to agricultural work, he found that the Labour Exchanges for the rural districts had not been established, and he had to make shift, just as if the Act had not been passed, with personal solicitation and private correspondence, and with costly advertisements in newspapers circulating in rural districts.

Apart from the failure to set up Labour Exchanges in the places in which no Distress Committees were established, the Act was itself in fault, as we can now see, in ever associating one of these organisations with the other. The fact that the Labour Exchange was established by, or in close connection with, a Distress Committee—as happened nearly everywhere outside the Metropolis—not only tended to make it regarded merely as an adjunct of the

Municipal Relief Works, but also prejudiced it, from the start, in the minds of competent skilled workmen seeking new situations, and of employers desiring anything better than the crowd of casual labourers and men downtrodden by misfortune or misconduct who make up the bulk of the applicants for Employment Relief. Nor did the Distress Committees make any attempt to create a network. We do not find that the different Labour Exchanges that professed to register the local demand for and supply of labour opened up communications with each other, in order to make known the local position for each other's benefit. To do this effectively needed organisation from a national centre, to which each Labour Exchange might have daily reported—even if it could report only that there were no unsatisfied demands for labour of any kind, and that there were so many men, of such and such occupations, out of work. Even this negative result would have been of use in preventing the aimless wandering in search of employment that now goes on. It might have proved, too, the extent and ubiquity of Unemployment. We cannot but regret that, just as no steps were taken by the Local Government Board to get established the complete network of Labour Exchanges contemplated by the Act of 1905, so no steps have been taken to organise, by means of a Central Exchange, any means of intercommunication among such local Exchanges as are in operation.

In the Metropolis, however, the experiment of the Labour Exchange has been tried with some success. The Central (Unemployed) Body took the view, after some discussion, that the Labour Exchanges contemplated by the Act of 1905 should have no connection with the temporary registers of applicants for Employment Relief that were opened each winter by the Distress Committees; and that what was required, in good times and bad alike, was some permanent machinery for enabling employers and wage-earners to find out each other's whereabouts and each other's requirements more easily and more certainly and more quickly than would otherwise be possible. The Labour Exchanges which had been set on foot in various parts of London were formed into a single organisation,

and after some careful experimenting as to what was and what was not practicable, the whole of the Metropolis was gradually covered by a network of public employment agencies, telephonically interconnected, and reporting to a common centre. These are already being resorted to by employers of labour of every kind, skilled and unskilled, male and female, manual and clerical, the number of situations offered through their agency being at the end of the year 1908 at the rate of 33,000 per annum. They are also being increasingly applied to by wage-earners of every kind, not merely by those who are actually Unemployed, but by those who expect or desire to change their situations. It is interesting to find that the Trade Unions, at first suspicious, if not actually hostile, have become steadily more friendly to the institution, which they find of positive advantage, not only to their members, but also to their organisation. We are informed that, on December 31, 1908, no fewer than thirty-two Trade Union Branches were already keeping their "vacant books" actually at the Labour Exchange itself. The number of situations of professedly permanent character filled by the Metropolitan Labour Exchanges at the end of 1908 was at the rate of more than 20,000 per annum.

The experience of the Labour Exchange in London indicates both its utility and its limitations. It does not increase the volume of demand for labour. It does not create work at wages where no employer offers it. But in all but the best organised trades it abridges the interval between one situation and another, during which no wages are earned. It greatly reduces the weary, aimless tramp of the Unemployed workman all over London, from one firm to another, in the attempt to discover, by actual application to one after another, which of them wants another hand. It enables the workman to ascertain, by calling at one office in his own neighbourhood, what inquiries have been made for his own kind of labour all over London. To the employer it offers, similarly, the choice among the available workmen of the kind he requires. But the Labour Exchange affords a further contribution towards the solution of the problem of Un-

employment. Experience proves that, even in London, at a time when thousands are unemployed, there are opportunities for the taking on of more hands which employers forego because they cannot, in the absence of machinery of this kind, discover quickly and without trouble exactly the kind of labour that they require. By enabling these opportunities to be taken, instead of being let slip, the Labour Exchange may, to some slight extent, and with regard to certain specialised kinds of skill, even increase the volume of employment. Finally, experience shows that the Labour Exchange offers the means of "decasualising" labour. Though one employer wants a man for Monday only, there are others who want men for Tuesday only, others for Wednesday only, and so on. In so far as such employers draw their casual labour from a common Exchange, it may cease to be casual so far as the labourers are concerned, one job being "dovetailed" with another so as to give each man practically continuous employment. To the possibility of developing this use of Labour Exchanges we shall recur in a subsequent chapter.

(F) *Paying the Cost of Removal*

But the Unemployed Workmen Act did not merely aim at providing machinery for ascertaining what situations were vacant in any part of the United Kingdom, and for discovering where there was a local excess, and where a local deficiency of labour. It also enabled the Local Authorities to make it possible for the necessitous man, and his family, to move to the situation found for him, or to the place where labour was most in demand. This, too, was to be outside the Poor Law. Mr. Walter Long had realised that to permit any Destitution Authority to subsidise the removal of the Unemployed from one locality to another would ruin, in advance, this method of helpfulness. For the first time for a whole generation the Act of 1905 enabled public funds to be used, apart from the Poor Law, for paying the expenses of the removal of men and their families from places in which they could get no employment, to other places in which

there was an ascertained demand for labour. The Central (Unemployed) Body for London set itself diligently to utilise all the opportunities thus afforded. The other parts of England and Wales were scrutinised to discover situations for which no local candidates were available, and, contrary to the common expectation, such were found. It was discovered that some men in distress had family connections in other places, by means of which they could get along and become self-supporting, if only they could come within their reach. Care was taken that no removal was sanctioned until satisfactory assurances were obtained that definite situations were available, that the employment offered was of a permanent character, and that arrangements had been made for providing suitable homes in the towns or villages to which the families were transferred. In this way it was found possible to assist the removal of some scores of families, representing about 300 persons; one-half of them from Woolwich to South Wales and Lancashire, where there has been an actual demand for labour; and one-half, being men who have been trained at the Farm Colony, to various situations in the country.

Pending the development of better means of discovering unsatisfied demands for labour in other parts of this country, the chief work of transfer has necessarily taken the form of removal to other parts of the Empire in which there was proved to be a need for more workers. Where men have expressed a desire to emigrate, and have been found, after careful investigation, in every way suitable, they have been assisted to go to Canada, and, in a few cases, to New Zealand. In the first two years of its existence the Central (Unemployed) Body thus enabled no fewer than 8600 persons to remove to new homes, in nearly all cases making arrangements which ensured the men employment immediately on arrival.

This policy of enabling selected men among the Unemployed to remove to new localities, whether merely from one county of England to another, or from one part of the Empire to another, is sometimes criticised as affording no real help. If it is said, the men who wish

to shift are strong and competent, the locality or country in which they are living cannot afford to lose their services; whilst if they are weak and incompetent, no other locality or country will wish to receive them, or will be able to provide a living for them. It was suggested, in short, that not only was there no unsatisfied demand for labour anywhere, but that, even if such an opening could be found, the best men would not need to go, and the worst men would not be allowed to come. This seems to have been the view taken by nearly all the provincial Distress Committees. But the Central (Unemployed) Body for London found that this summary way of disposing of the possibilities of migration and emigration did not exhaust the question. Investigation and experience proved that, whilst a change of locality was not available as a method of assisting the bulk of unemployed workmen, there were some men for whose distress it was a successful, and even the most appropriate, remedy. At all times, and in all places, there are "industrial misfits"—men who have been thrown out of gear with their surroundings, it may be by the local stoppage of their industry, it may be by the loss of heart in themselves—who will never really be able to struggle to their feet in their old locality, but who, could they but get a new start, amid new circumstances, are likely to become permanently successful. To enable these men to change their environment may be, as the experience of the Central (Unemployed) Body for London has abundantly proved, the most really helpful, as well as the most permanently economical, way of relieving their distress.

(g) *The Inadequacy of the Unemployed Workmen Act*

But although the experience of the Central (Unemployed) Body for London proves the Unemployed Workmen Act to contain germs of very promising developments, the provisions of the Act have been found, in nearly all great centres of population, quite inadequate to the needs. The Act was avowedly only experimental in character. It definitely established the public responsibility for dealing

with Unemployment, and provided machinery for ascertaining the area and depth of the distress, without at the same time affording the Local Authorities any adequate means of coping with the distress that they had probed and tested. We have accordingly found an almost universal dissatisfaction with the Act, which sometimes takes the form, especially among those whose experience has been limited to the provision of Employment Relief, of declaring it to be of no utility whatever.

We may note, to begin with, the failure of practically every Local Authority to do anything at all even for a large proportion of those applicants whom they had found eligible for assistance under the Act and in every way worthy of it. Thus, it has been found that, in round numbers, out of every hundred applicants who have presented themselves, a third have been ineligible under the limiting conditions prescribed by the Local Government Board, and out of those whose claims have been entertained, at least half have had to be sent empty away, whilst those for whom anything could be done at all have got help only after long delay, and then only in a manner hopelessly inadequate to their proved need. It is difficult to realise the sickening despair which conscientious members of Distress Committees have felt in listening to the stories of applicant after applicant, whom they knew to be respectable hard-working men in distress through no fault of their own, whose distress it was generally understood that Parliament had directed to be relieved, and for whom it was nevertheless manifest that nothing was likely to be done. Matters were much aggravated by the exceptionally prolonged depression in the London building trade. It must, we think, be a fundamental principle of any dealing with the subject of Unemployment at all, that the Public Authority charged with this service must be in a position to provide appropriate treatment, *in one way or another*, for every case of proved eligibility that comes before it.

The failure to do anything even for the most worthy applicants has been, to some extent, due to lack of funds. Though the Act set up public bodies to grapple with the distress, and allowed them to take out of the rates all the

expenses of their organisation, it permitted no expenditure from the rates upon the very object of the organisation, namely, the relief of the distress. In most places the donations of the charitable have proved quite inadequate. The special grants made by Parliament each year have been made so late, and have been clogged with so many conditions, that many places have found it impracticable to obtain any advantage from them. "The Act," deposed one of our witnesses, "either went too far by being introduced at all, or not far enough, the former being my own opinion. Speaking generally, it is absolutely ridiculous to think that voluntary funds will be subscribed, when certain sums may be taken out of the rates in connection with the same objects. We have had the proper machinery in motion since the Act was put into force, but have had no funds whatever to work with so far as paying for work done, whether necessary and of a good and useful character or simply in the form of relief work. As I have said before, we tried to carry out the Act, but because we could not show a condition of affairs that was nearly impossible, we failed utterly in obtaining any portion of the grant made by Parliament, to the utter disgust of many of our members."

The conditions of eligibility for assistance under the Act—imposed, it must be remembered, not by the Act itself, but by the Local Government Board—have been proved greatly to limit its utility. The residential qualification, for instance, has been found to exclude some of the most worthy applicants, and to operate in some cases as a penalty for having really tried to find work in another district across the purely artificial borough boundary. As one Distress Committee points out:

"A man is for many years a ratepayer in one district, and, to better his position, he removes to another district, and in, say, six months' time, through some cause or other, and very probably through no fault of his own, he loses the position and is out of work; he is not eligible to be registered under the Act in the district where he resides, and he is not eligible for the district which he has left, because in both cases he has not the necessary twelve months' residential qualification."

The exclusion from the benefits of the Act of men who had received Poor Relief, and of men who had been assisted under the Act at any time during two successive years, debarred from help many of the most pressing cases. Thus, at Southampton, "upwards of 200 deserving men with families have been prohibited from participating in the work at the disposal of the Distress Committee, for the reason that these men have on an average received 3s. or 4s. each in relief at the cost of the poor rate. These small sums have only been obtained by the men when their families have been absolutely in need of food." The regulations led, in fact, to the ludicrous position that, whilst the West Ham Distress Committee were providing for hundreds of men on their own Relief Works, the West Ham Guardians were driven themselves to "provide relief work on their land . . . for . . . men who have registered with the Distress Committee, and are considered suitable cases for assistance, but who are disqualified from receiving same owing to having received either similar assistance within the past two years or Poor Law Relief." The result was that several hundreds of the Unemployed were employed on vacant land by the Distress Committee, and, within a quarter of a mile of them, several hundreds more on other land by the Board of Guardians. It was, therefore, not surprising that Mr. Asquith, in November 1908, announced that these exclusions would be abandoned.

There was, in fact, no justification under the Statute, as the Local Government Boards for Scotland and Ireland rightly held, for excluding men who had, in the past, received Poor Relief. The Act was intended for the relief of a limited class of the Unemployed—those who, from no fault of their own, had fallen out of situations of assumed permanency, and were in distress. What this class was does not clearly appear in any of the conditions drafted by the Local Government Board. Conditions aiming at the exclusion of the Unemployable, of the chronically Under-employed, and of the Men of Discontinuous Employment—classes that we shall specifically describe in the following chapter—would have been in accordance with the intentions of the authors of the Statute. But to any such

cleavage the fact of having in the past received Poor Relief, perhaps on account of some exceptional emergency, was quite irrelevant.

Finally, we may note that the form and substance of the inquiries into the applicants' conduct and past life prescribed by the Local Government Board excited resentment, and greatly limited the benefits of the Act. "Some of the questions on the Record Paper are of such an inquisitorial character that the best class of Unemployed workmen, almost without exception, have refused to register, preferring to suffer in silence." It was, in fact, never made clear with what objects, or on what principle, the inquiries were prescribed. The essential fact to be ascertained as a condition of the eligibility of an Able-bodied applicant for treatment by an Employment Authority—treatment, that is to say, *of some kind*—is, in our opinion, the existence of Unemployment. This, of itself, should be sufficient to entitle an applicant to assistance appropriate to his needs. We do not think that further inquiries would have been resented, if it had been made clear that they had been prescribed, not for the object of finding out whom to exclude, but merely for the purpose of considering *in what way* the applicant could most appropriately and helpfully be relieved. It is, in our opinion, only at this point and for this purpose—that is to say, as diagnosis for guidance in treatment—that inquiries as to character, past employment, sobriety and membership of societies are warranted or socially useful.

(H) *Conclusions*

We have, therefore, to report:—

1. That as compared with the methods of relieving the Unemployed under the Poor Law, the experience of the policy—inaugurated by Mr. Chamberlain's Circular of 1886, and definitely confirmed by the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905—of withdrawing the Unemployed from the Poor Law, has proved full of valuable suggestion and promise.

2. That the precedent of the Lancashire Cotton Famine

suggests that Public Works, carried on under specialised organisation for a limited period, with the object of employing particular classes of persons deprived of definite situations by some accidental or temporary cessation of their regular employment, and practically certain to resume their ordinary occupations, may prove the easiest method of relieving their transient destitution.

3. That twenty years' experience has proved that it is not practicable in ordinary times to disentangle these cases from those of respectable men who are chronically Unemployed or Under-employed; with the result that any work at wages afforded by Local Authorities as a method of providing for the Unemployed tends to become chronic, and, instead of being confined to the men thrown out of definite situations by the accidental and temporary dislocation of industry, is, in practice, participated in by those who are chronically Unemployed or Under-employed, to an even greater extent than by those for whom it was intended.

4. That whilst the Unemployed Workmen Act has enabled a certain number of respectable workmen to tide over temporary distress without recourse to the Poor Law, it has demonstrated that, as a method for providing for chronic Unemployment or Under-employment, the provision of work at wages by Local Authorities affords no remedy and tends even to intensify the evil.

5. That the work at wages provided by Local Authorities is, in practice, either diverted from the ordinary employees of the Local Authorities, or else abstracted from what would otherwise have gone to the regular employees of contractors for public works; with the result, in either case, of creating, sooner or later, as much Unemployment as it relieves, and of thus throwing the cost of relieving the distress upon other wage-earners.

6. That work at wages, given to the Unemployed by Local Authorities for a few days or a few weeks at a time, tends, like the opening of a Labour Yard by the Board of Guardians, actually to promote the disastrous Under-employment characteristic of some industries, and positively encourages employers and employed to acquiesce

in intermittent employment and casual jobs, instead of regular work at definite weekly wages.

7. That the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, whilst not excluding temporary Relief Works, contemplated and provided also for other experiments in providing for the Unemployed, which have unfortunately not been adequately put into operation by the Local Government Boards for England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland respectively, or by the Local Authorities.

8. That one of the most promising of these experiments—the provision of Rural Colonies where the Unemployed could be trained with a view to their permanent re-establishment as self-supporting citizens, whether on the land or otherwise, in England or elsewhere—has been tried at the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony, with a considerable measure of success. Unfortunately, as it seems to us, the Local Government Board for England and Wales now insists on regarding this Farm Colony only as a means of affording temporary *relief* and not as a means of training men for future self-support; and refuses to permit any further expenditure for the purpose of permanently establishing even those men who have been selected and trained.

9. That another valuable provision of the Unemployed Workmen Act was that requiring the establishment, quite apart from the existence of distress from Unemployment, of a complete network of Labour Exchanges, covering the whole of the United Kingdom. Wherever a Distress Committee was not established, the Act expressly required the Council of every County and County Borough to appoint a Special Committee to investigate the conditions of the labour market by means of Labour Exchanges, and to establish or assist such Exchanges within its area. Such a network of Labour Exchanges, covering the whole Kingdom, would have afforded, as the experience of the Metropolitan Exchanges now demonstrates, valuable information both to Unemployed Workmen and to Local Authorities dealing with the problem. Unfortunately, this provision of the Act, though as regards England and Wales, mandatory in its terms, appears to have been

ignored by the Local Government Boards of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and has accordingly, with the exception of London and three places in Scotland, not been put in operation.

10. That in consequence of this failure to establish the complete network of Labour Exchanges contemplated by the Unemployed Workmen Act, Local Authorities have been greatly hampered in their attempts to put into operation the other provisions of the Act. Thus, the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony has remained isolated; and great difficulties have been experienced in discovering suitable situations in other parts of England for the men there trained for agricultural pursuits. Moreover, the provision enabling Local Authorities to pay the expenses of removing men to places where situations had been found for them, has, in the lack of machinery for discovering such situations within the United Kingdom, been almost exclusively used for the purpose of conveying them to Canada.

11. That notwithstanding this failure to put the Unemployed Workmen Act in operation in the way that was intended, and the manifold shortcomings of the Act itself, we are of opinion that (as compared with the alternative of throwing the Unemployed back into the Poor Law) it has proved of considerable value; and that it should certainly be continued in force until a more adequate scheme of dealing with the grave social problem of Unemployment, otherwise than under the Poor Law, has been placed upon the Statute Book.

• CHAPTER IV

THE DISTRESS FROM UNEMPLOYMENT AS IT EXISTS TO-DAY

WE find in the United Kingdom, at all times, a considerable number of families in need of the necessaries of life, owing to the breadwinner being out of work. In the winter of every year, and throughout some years in every decade, the number of such cases doubles and quadruples; and many who were before merely in distress sink gradually into destitution, and in some cases into habitual pauperism. About these facts there is no dispute. There are differences of opinion as to the degree in which the Unemployment and the destitution may be attributable to personal shortcomings, of employers or of employed, or to the manner in which we have chosen to organise the nation's industry. But whatever the causes of the distress, its existence involves, on the one hand, great national waste of productive power, and, on the other, a vast amount of personal suffering and physical and mental degeneration.

We have found ourselves unable to answer two elementary questions. There are no statistics available which enable us to compute, even within hundreds of thousands, how many persons are at any one time simultaneously in distress from Unemployment; or whether this number is or is not greater, relatively or absolutely, than the corresponding numbers for other countries at the present time, or for our own country at previous times. But there exists in the "Vacant Books" of Trade Unions, in the registers of the Distress Committees, and in the case-papers of Boards of Guardians, as well as in the experience of hundreds of officials and multifarious philanthropic agencies,

a mass of information from which we have gathered a definite conception of the characteristics of this waxing and waning host—whether one or two hundred thousand, or three or four times that number—of necessitous unemployed men.

The persons in distress from want of employment have been classified in various ways—according to age, to locality, to trades or departments of trades, and even according to such vague characteristics as whether they are skilled or unskilled, of regular or irregular habits, of good character or bad. These systems of classification have their several advantages, and we have made use of the results that they yield. But, from the stand-point of the Prevention of Unemployment and the Provision for Distress, we have found most practically useful an analysis of the Unemployed according to the nature of the industrial engagements by which they normally gain their livelihood. The persons in distress from Unemployment are found, in practice, to approximate to one or other of the following four types:—

(a) Those who have lately been in definite situations of presumed permanency; for instance, an engine-driver, a cotton-spinner, an agricultural labourer, a carman or a domestic servant.

(b) Those who normally, in their own trades, shift from job to job, and from one employer to another, with more or less interval between jobs, but each lasting for weeks, and perhaps for months; for example, the contractor's, navvy, the bricklayer, the plumber, the plasterer and, indeed, all varieties of artisans and labourers of the building trades, etc.

(c) Those who normally earn a bare subsistence by casual jobs, lasting only a few hours each, or a day or two; for instance, the dock and wharf labourers, the market porters, and the "casual hands" forming a fringe round many industries.

(d) Those who have been ousted, or have wilfully withdrawn themselves from the ranks of the workers; for instance, the man broken down by some infirmity or by advancing age, the habitual inmate of philan-

thropic "shelters" and Casual Wards of the great cities, and the professional Vagrant.

In all these classes we find men of all grades of conduct—we might almost say of all kinds of skill. All the classes swell and contract in numbers, with bad trade and good respectively; all are affected by seasonal fluctuations. But, regarded from the stand-point of the Prevention of Unemployment and the Provision for Distress, each of the four classes—to be hereafter designated the Men from Permanent Situations, the Men of Discontinuous Employment, the Under-employed and the Unemployable—has its characteristic opportunities and peculiar needs.

(A) *Class I.—The Men from Permanent Situations*

It is fortunate that the great majority of the twelve millions of adult wage-earning population are normally in situations of considerable permanency. They enjoy no permanence of tenure and are liable to be dismissed at short notice, but as a matter of fact they find themselves working, practically without intermission throughout the year, and often for many years, for one and the same employer. This is the condition of the great majority (though not of all) of agricultural labourers, of railway servants, of miners, of compositors, of textile operatives, and, indeed, of the bulk of the factory workers, as it is of the majority of clerks, of teachers and of domestic servants. But even in the best of times, men in the prime of life and of good character and ability lose permanent situations of this sort; it may be by the bankruptcy of their employer, by a change in management, by the introduction of a new machine, a new process, or even a new organisation of the industry; whilst there is also, taking the United Kingdom as a whole, a perpetual stream of discharges due to occasional misconduct, trade disputes, the arbitrariness of a foreman, and the hundred and one frictions of industrial life. When trade is bad, bankruptcies increase in number, industries shift uneasily to cheaper districts, orders slacken, particular works are "shut down," or branches closed by concentration of business, personal quarrels and trade dis-

putes become occasions for ridding the shop of surplus hands. This incessant dropping of individuals from permanent situations into the ranks of the Unemployed—characteristic of all times—becomes, in periods of depression, a serious recruitment, amounting, for the Kingdom as a whole, to many thousands in a week; with the result that there are hundreds of applicants for each of the rare vacancies that occur. It was these men, who had newly dropped from regular situations of presumed permanency, and who found themselves, through no fault of their own, unable to regain such situations, whom Mr. Chamberlain had in view in 1886 when he issued his momentous Circular. It was for these men, “the *élite* of the Unemployed,” that Mr. Walter Long and Mr. Gerald Balfour designed the Unemployed Workmen Act.

The fate of these men, in bad times and good alike, seems in practice to depend on two circumstances; whether or not they have some specialised skill for which the demand will recur in such a way and at such a place that they can promptly ascertain the fact of its recurrence, and whether they are fortunate enough to be able to belong to a Trade Union of sufficiently high organisation. In times of good trade, the skilled operative assisted by the Trade Union organisation, which is aware of all vacancies, gets pushed into another situation, even if his previous dismissal had been his own fault. In times of bad trade, the unemployed Trade Unionist gets his regular weekly “Out of Work Pay,” from the corporate savings of himself and his fellows: whilst having at his disposal (and even forced on his attention) the earliest information as to when and where the renewed demand for his particular handicraft is manifesting itself. So far as there exists in any occupation a well-organised Trade Union of national scope, giving “Out of Work Pay,” we have, in its “Vacant Book” and its Unemployment Benefits, perhaps the most successful agency for dealing with the problem. Even here there are the cases of the man who has remained outside the Trade Union; of the man who has “fallen out of benefit” or been excluded from the Trade Union; and of the man who has had to give up his membership (perhaps on becoming

a foreman). And there is one contingency against which even the most highly-organised Trade Union cannot insure its members, that is, a permanent, rapidly progressing diminution in the demand for the kind of skill that has been organised. No Trade Union could have provided for the hand-loom weavers displaced by the power-loom, for the hand paper-makers displaced by the machine, for the sail-makers and the saddlers whose product is less and less required, for the crowds of workers now being superseded by the use of motor cars. If the Trade Union in such a plight is powerful, it closes its ranks against new apprentices, superannuates some members, lets others fall out of benefit, and keeps what remains of the demand as a good livelihood, at high rates, for an ever dwindling remnant of skilled men. If the Trade Union is powerless, the whole membership sinks, like the hand-loom weavers, into the morass of chronic Under-employment, and thus falls out of our First into our Third Class. To this descent into the morass of Under-employment of whole sections of highly skilled and responsible wage-earners we shall recur in a subsequent section of this chapter.

But the vast majority of the unemployed of our First Class—men who have lately been in definite situations of presumed permanency—are not men of any definitely specialised skill which has been organised in a Trade Union. They are isolated individuals of every variety of aptitude and experience, of every degree of dexterity and trustworthiness, and of every kind of nondescript occupation, not amounting to any definitely recognised handicraft. They are the very opposite of the “man of odd jobs,” for they have often remained in one and the same industrial function for many years. These men, though they have trained themselves to fit the particular situations that they have lost, have no skill that meets a general demand, and indeed often none that bears any distinctive name. For this reason, indeed, it is almost impossible to state from what occupations they come. They are the responsible “handymen” of large firms of every kind, acting as warehousemen, packers, store-keepers, porters, gate-keepers, caretakers, lamp-trimmers,

men in charge of this or that small department of work, etc. They may have been employed as general assistants in breweries, large stores, or, indeed, any big concerns. They may, in the alternative, have been the universal assistants of small masters; sometimes rising for a brief period into being small masters themselves. Included in this class, too, are the skilled craftsmen of small and decaying handicrafts in course of supersession by machinery or new processes, such as assistants in rope walks, or coachmakers' wheel-wrights. Their numbers, for instance, are at present swollen by grooms, stablemen, carmen, cab drivers, and other workers about horses. Among them are "men who for years have satisfied the demand [for labour] in one form [and who] may find the form suddenly changed, their niche in industry broken up; their hard-won skill superfluous in a new world; themselves also superfluous unless they will and can learn fresh arts and find the way into unfamiliar occupations. They are displaced by economic forces entirely beyond their control and taking little or no account of personal merits." All these men, valuable to the community as their qualities of industry, regularity and aptitude to direct, to co-operate, or to obey ought to make them, find, under present circumstances, the greatest difficulty in regaining the permanent situations for which they are fitted. A man may be of excellent character, full of health and vigour, and eager to get work. But if he has been for years in one place—especially if that place has been, not a regular handicraft, but something of nondescript character, in which he has adapted himself to his employer's needs—he is least of all men in a position, unless by happy accident, to get another situation. At best, he depletes his little savings by answering innumerable advertisements in as many newspapers as he can get access to; keeping his wife and family respectably week after week; and week after week losing heart and self-respect. And whilst it is more difficult for him than it is for men of less permanent employment to find another situation, the evil effects of unemployment, the physical and moral deterioration consequent on enforced idleness, work on him all the more quickly and all the more seriously.

If for some reason he has few friends, or if his savings have already been depleted by family illness or other misfortune, what is vital to him is to be able to discover, without a ruinous loss of time, without the cost of advertising, without even the very real tax of answering advertisements, what situations are open to him anywhere in his town, or anywhere in the Kingdom. In the absence of any social machinery for this purpose such men often lose heart. "The general impression," notes one of our informants, "was one of despair and bitterness, and they considered themselves the sufferers from a great deal of mismanagement, but where the mismanagement was they were unable to say. Several of these men had held good situations for periods varying from seven to twenty-four years each, and had lost those situations through no fault of their own, but through the firm giving up, one man being turned out after twenty years' service because the firm changed hands." In short, the faculty of finding work is wholly distinct from the faculty of doing work. Each faculty grows with use, and shrinks with disuse; the man who has always been in one situation has neither the experience nor the aptitude—he may even be lacking in the temperament—requisite to push himself into another situation. His very excellences stand in his way. He is, in fact, often as unfitted to find work as the "casual" in any trade is to keep it.

In many respects this First Class of Unemployed, the men from permanent situations, are those to whom it is most important to bring timely help. But, so long as they can be included in this class, they seldom appear among the applicants to Distress Committees, and they are practically never found in the Workhouse or the Casual Ward. Such a man, if not provided for by a Trade Union, struggles on as best he can; clinging to the hope of regaining a permanent situation through friends and old shop-mates, by advertising and answering advertisements, by applying personally here and there at hazard. For him the chance of odd days, or even odd weeks, of "Employment Relief" has little attraction and no advantage. He has no more aptitude for the rough digging,

hauling, wheeling, road-making, road-sweeping, or even tree-planting, furnished by the Local Authority, than for the stone-breaking of a Labour Yard. What he needs is to discover some position of responsibility that he can fill, or some opportunity to work at his own trade; or in default of this, the chance of fitting himself by training for some other occupation whether in this country or another. None of these are offered to him by a Local Authority whose only notion of dealing with unemployment is to set as large as possible a crowd of heterogeneous men to labouring work for brief spells. The other functions contemplated by the Unemployed Workmen Act, though at present not generally in operation, might be of greater use to him. A well-managed Labour Exchange, frequented by all the employers of the town and in connection with the Labour Exchanges of other towns, might be able to bring him in touch with an employer in search of a man of regular and responsible conduct, or of his special aptitude. Migration to another part of the kingdom might then help him. If he has a taste for country life he is the sort of man who might make a success of a small holding. Or emigration to another part of the British Empire might prove to be the best solution for him personally and especially for his family, though by this method the mother country loses a man of regular habits and persistent industry. Failing all these expedients for regaining their position, we see men of this type sinking lower and lower, so that, before they apply to the Distress Committee for "Employment Relief," or to the Board of Guardians for admission to the Workhouse, they have often fallen into one or other of our following classes. If such a man is physically strong, he gravitates towards the building trades, or "goes labouring" at some job which lasts for a few weeks or months (Class II.). If he is a weakling, or growing infirm through advancing years, he falls into daily odd jobs, and becomes one of the chronically under-employed (Class III.). If he is a man with grave moral imperfections and weaknesses, hitherto kept in curb by regular employment, he rapidly becomes one or other kind of unemployable (Class IV.). Thus,

although those who register themselves with the Distress Committees or for Poor Relief belong, at the time of application, almost entirely to one or other of the last three classes, such a classification, in, we fear, thousands of cases, veils the tragedy of a descent from the First Class—the tragedy of the physical and moral degradation, through lack of timely and appropriate help, of a man who once honourably filled a permanent situation.

(B) *Class II.—The Men of Discontinuous Employment*

The next largest class of wage-earners is that of the Men of Discontinuous Employment; men who do not in any case remain permanently in one situation, but whose normal condition, even at the best of times, is that of working at a succession of jobs, passing from one job to another, from one employer to another, each engagement usually lasting, in practice, perhaps a few weeks or months. The problem presented by this large class is not, as with our First Class, the complete and long-continued Unemployment of a relatively small proportion of the total number; but the perpetual “leakage” between jobs, and the periodic occurrence, in the lives of nearly all the men, of periods of distress, and even of destitution, during the intervals between jobs.

(i.) *The Operatives of the Building Trades*

The most numerous section of this class of Men of Discontinuous Employment is that of the artisans and labourers of the building trades, whom we find in great numbers on the registers of the Distress Committees. Of these men, who may be estimated to number, throughout the United Kingdom, something like a million, a certain proportion normally hold, especially in rural districts and small towns, situations of some permanency, and really belong to our Class I. A very small proportion of those employed by the large firms in the great towns are in like case. But the vast majority of them—as towns increase in size, apparently a steadily increasing proportion—

habitually pass from job to job, working a few days or weeks for one employer, and then, when his particular building is finished, getting taken on at another job, usually by another employer. In times of good trade, among the best men, in the most skilled branches of the industry, employment throughout the greater part of the year may be practically without intermission, and even the time lost through the winter's slackness may be small. At the best of times this is not the case with the bulk of the labourers, or with the less skilled or less steady men, who have, each winter, spells of unemployment. In times of depression the best of men may find the intervals between jobs, especially in the winter, extending into weeks and even into months at a time. The labourers, like the less steady or less assiduous among the skilled men, will then often get only a few odd days' work in a month, or a few odd weeks throughout a whole year. The building trades operatives, unlike the navvies, do not seem to move much from town to town, though the young men among the bricklayers and stonemasons will still use the "travelling benefit" afforded by their Trade Union to look for work in other towns. But the spreading out of London, Glasgow, Manchester, and other large urban aggregations has made the men of the building trades very mobile within these towns—tramping all over the urban aggregations, applying for jobs at one building after another, and readily shifting house from one side of the district to the other—often ten miles across—in order to be near their work.

It is not generally realised that hardly any man among this vast population of building trades operatives, amounting to one-ninth of the whole nation, escapes, at some time of his life, a period of severe distress, from which he and his family seriously suffer. When the trial comes, it is inevitable that a proportion of those exposed to it should succumb—one or other member of the family may die in consequence of prolonged lack of the full necessities of life; there are widows and orphans prematurely robbed of the breadwinner of the family; and, more frequently, there is a demoralisation of character, and a descent in the social

scale—it may be from the carpentering to casual labouring, it may be from steady work to life as a professional Vagrant or other variety of the Unemployable. That this excessive discontinuity of employment, and the distress which it occasions, is not due to any lack of vigour or activity in the operatives seeking work is, we think, clearly demonstrated. “There is always such a plentiful supply” of men eager for work, deposed the general foreman of a large building firm, “that the trouble is having to refuse applicants who attend early morning and throughout the day, waylaying the foreman at every turn. . . . They will follow a builder’s cart should it have material until they find out where the job is, and also report same to Trade Unions, so that on going to an entirely vacant site to commence operations you will often find it surrounded by men of all trades.”

The result on the men of these conditions of employment is often disastrous. “The enforced idleness on completion of a job naturally throws the men upon their own resources, which is in nine cases out of ten, the nearest public-house. The frequent change from strenuous hard work to absolute indolence to men of this character naturally tends to gradual moral and physical degeneration, and ultimately the individuals become unfit for work even when opportunity offers.”

(ii.). *The Public Works Men*

Even more typical of the class of Men of Discontinuous Employment is the navvy, or, as he usually describes himself, the “public works man.” He has never been, and never expects to be, continuously in the employment of one contractor for more than a few weeks, or perhaps a few months, though here and there a man may keep at a job continuously for a year or more. How extensive is this class of navvies is not recorded; but we have it in evidence that it is estimated to number, in the United Kingdom, no less than 176,000 men. “They move about,” reports the Local Government Board, “from one public

work to another, a distinct class or tribe, separated by habit and circumstances from the rest of the community, and in some respects often outside the action of ordinary sanitary laws."

The conditions under which these men habitually work can hardly be deemed favourable to the development of thrift, sobriety, or general regularity of life. "There appears to be," says the Local Government Board Report, "no legal obligation on contractors to provide accommodation for their workmen. When important works are in progress, likely to last over a considerable time, and especially if these are at a considerable distance from centres of population, the contractors generally, in their own interests and in order to secure workmen, provide accommodation, and this is often excellent (*e.g.* the Tidworth Settlement on Salisbury Plain); but I am informed that smaller contractors, who have tendered at 'cutting prices,' are apt to save in the 'hutting,' and to provide inadequate accommodation or none." What these conditions were for several hundreds of men, as recently as 1907, at a place close to London, is vividly set forth:—

"Messrs. Price and Reeves have pushed on the work (Brooklands Motor Track, Weybridge) rapidly; the number of men employed by them since the beginning of the contract has progressively increased, and has been approximately as follows:—

January (1907)	300 to 400
February	600 „ 700
March	1000 „ 1100
April	1500 „ 1600

As the track is ~~now~~ approaching completion, the number of men employed will rapidly diminish during the month of May, and it is estimated that the work will be completed by the end of June. Night and day shifts are at work, each shift working for ten hours, the night shift working with Wells' flare lamps. The men are paid not less than 5½d. an hour, but those on piece-work make 6d. to 7d. an hour. Thus the wages in fine weather vary from about 27s. to 30s. a week, but time is apt to be broken by rain, and the average wage may be taken at about 24s. a week. At the time of my visit, April 23rd to 25th, at least 1600 men were employed daily on the work. In addition to those in regular employment there were a variable and uncertain number of irregular workers who work

about two days at a time, draw a "sub.," and then hang about the public-houses till the money is consumed. There were also casual unemployed labourers and tramps who had come into the neighbourhood on the chance of a job, or to sponge on the regular navvies. In all it may be assumed that a floating population of not fewer than 2000 men has been added to the normal population during the month of April.

Having been round the works by night as well as by day, and conversed with scores of the men, I can confidently state that many—probably 300 or more—of the men regularly employed on the works at the date of my visit were without any proper lodging. Men working on the night shift resort after work to the public-houses where they buy beer to wash down their breakfast, after which they commonly lie down in the open, and sleep for several hours. If the weather be cold or wet, they are prone to half stupefy themselves with beer before lying down to rest under these conditions. On the occasion of my visit I found a large group of navvies having their breakfast outside the "Hand and Spear Hotel," and several scores of them were sleeping among the gorse and heather of Weybridge Common. Of these, some were doubtless "camp followers," or Unemployed, but the majority were genuine navvies, as was evident from their dress, their hands, and the condition of their boots, as well as from their own statements. On the night of April 24th, I patrolled the neighbourhood of Byfleet and the track, accompanied by two constables. I may mention that the police had recently, and particularly the night before my visit, been active in evicting navvies sleeping out in cowsheds, etc., and that, therefore, fewer were to be found than would otherwise have been the case; many, doubtless, having gone further afield to find shelter. We visited several public-houses, which we found so full as barely to afford standing room. The navvies in these houses complained bitterly of the failure of the contractors to find accommodation. After the public-houses were closed we found:—Six men sleeping in straw-yards, in or under the stacks; seventeen men sleeping in a disused cowshed, 24 feet by 12 feet by 7 feet at the eaves. This shed was inside the track. The men were sleeping on the bare ground, without straw or hay for bedding. The available air space was certainly less than 200 cubic feet per head. More than a score of men were lying or sitting round a brazier near a coffee-stall, having no other prospect of shelter for the night. About thirty were sleeping in a dell near the railway line in groups round fires, which they had kindled between the trunks of felled trees. A casual search revealed three men sleeping among the gorse and heather of Weybridge Common. I cannot doubt but that careful search would have led to the finding of many more. As was the case in the daytime, the great

majority of these homeless men were genuine navvies, regularly working for the contractor. Prior to April 10, some rough shelters of fir boughs and corrugated iron had been erected by the men themselves on two sides inside the track, nicknamed respectively "Firwood Avenue" and the "Hotel Cecil." On that date a letter from Mr. Bilney, a local magistrate, appeared in the local *County Times*, drawing public attention to the inadequate and insanitary nature of these shelters. Mr. Davenport, the contractors' manager, forthwith caused these shelters to be burnt down, and seems to claim merit for his action in this respect, despite the fact that prior to my visit he took no action whatever to provide shelter for those evicted, whose condition was thus worse than before. The Inspector of Nuisances of the Chertsey Urban District informs me that on April 17th, and again on the 24th, he found four navvies sleeping in a hen-coop. The fact cannot be too strongly emphasised that the navvies employed on this work, other than those having lodgings in the neighbourhood, or returning directly after work by train to their lodgings in London or elsewhere, had no place provided by the contractors to which they could resort."

Another feature of the brutalising conditions under which the navvy works, making thrift and regularity of life almost impossible, is the practice of subbing. "A large proportion of navvies, after doing two or three days' work, draw a 'sub.' for the work done, and rest for a few days till the amount drawn has been expended (usually in drink). Thus it not seldom happens that a contractor must have 100 men on his books in order to secure that fifty shall be always at work, and the housing difficulty is intensified. 'Subbing' is necessary at the commencement of work, as many of the navvies will probably have tramped long distances to the work, and arrive penniless, but the evil might be minimised if the contractors refused to 'sub.' after the first fortnight, and in any case refused to 'sub.' the full amount earned."

This section of Class II. is of special interest to reformers of the Poor Law, because it is almost the only part of the working class population, apart from the seamen on tramp from port to port, which habitually makes use, without scruple and without any sense of degradation, of the Casual Wards lying on the great lines of communication from town to town. "When walking from place to place, and very often finding it impossible to get work,"

we were told by Mr. John Ward, M.P., of the Navvies' Union, "one is obliged to seek the Casual Ward occasionally. . . . The great difficulty, then, with the workman is that he loses two or three days. No matter how regular his habits may have been, if he finds himself in difficulties and obliged to seek the Casual Ward while looking for work, he has to perform a task which makes it impossible for him to get on to the public works, or works of any description, that day to look for employment; and that is a great inconvenience." We find, indeed, that in 1905, at a little rural Workhouse on the high road between Plymouth and London, more than one-third of the total number of persons admitted to the Casual Ward were navvies passing from the newly-completed Birmingham Waterworks at Rhayader and the Avonmouth Docks, on their way to the Keyham Dockyard Extension Works and the St. German's Railway. We append notes relating to some of these men from the interesting reports of the Master of the Workhouse to his Board of Guardians:—

"*G. D.*, aged 28 years; a labourer. Last employed at Rhayader, in Wales, on the Birmingham Waterworks. Out of work about three weeks. Previous to that worked on the Swansea Waterworks, at Craig, Brecknockshire. He was there several months. Admits that when he is in work he drinks rather heavily, and that if it were not for this weakness, he would probably get permanent work. He is a well-spoken and finely developed young man.

"*W. B.*, 61 years; a labourer. Public works man. Last worked on Salisbury Plain. There about eight months. Left two months ago. Shortening hands. This man is an annual visitor. He calls about once in every twelve months. Is a good worker. Served 16 years 128 days in the Royal Engineers. Invalided out in 1885. Had a pension of 1s. a day for twelve months, and 8d. a day for a further period of four years.

"*G. N.*, 28; a labourer. Last worked at Saltash. Left there last Saturday. He is a public works man. From conversation it appears that at this time of the year the amount earned is very small. By the time deductions are made for train fare to work, loss of time, etc., there is little left after paying for lodgings, and this little is, no doubt, got rid of in drink.

"*W. H.*, 45 years; a labourer. Last worked at Langport. Worked there twelve months, and left on February 4th on account of difficulty in procuring lodgings. In the first part of the time

he was on a section where lodgings were procurable. Public works man. Has been here several times.

"C. R., 29; a labourer. Last employed on the Honeybourne Railway, near Cheltenham. Left there three weeks ago. Was employed driving horse and cart for nine months. Asked why he left, he said he 'got the sack for being drunk.' Was here once before. Is suffering from an attack of sciatica. He volunteered the statement: 'Us chaps' (meaning public works men) 'drink heavy, and if out of a job have got to go on tramp. Forget being in these places' (Casual Wards) 'when we get into another job.'"

"There is a lot of truth in the foregoing," remarks the Master of the Casual Ward. "A large number of the men who have recently passed through the Wards are without doubt hard-working men, but as soon as they get their money a lot of it (in fact, all the surplus after paying for lodgings) goes for drink. The result is they are always living from hand to mouth, and consequently when they get discharged from their works—either through their own fault or the 'shortening of hands' or any other cause—they have no money, and are compelled to go on tramp until they are fortunate enough to get other employment."

It is apparently into the grade of navvies that the physically strong men of the first class—especially those from the army—tend to pass, if they are unsuccessful in regaining a permanent situation, and are unencumbered by wife and children.

The existence of so large a class of men, not only in discontinuous employment under demoralising surroundings, but also perpetually shifting from place to place without their wives and children, and without any systematic arrangement for their travelling or their accommodation, appears to us a great social evil. For the lack of any proper provision for the accommodation of these "public works men," as described in the Local Government Board Report from which we have quoted, is no exceptional, but habitual. We need only mention the danger to the Public Health. "Not only are these men," reports Dr. Farrer, "owing to their migratory habits, apt to carry infection from place to place, and in particular from one common lodging-house to another, but they are as a class, specially averse to vaccination or re-vaccination

partly, no doubt, owing to the interference with work which the operation entails." As soon as each job is completed the men are paid off, and are left stranded without employment; some to drift about the locality to which they have been attracted, to intensify the local competition for casual labouring work, and presently to swell the register of the Distress Committee. Such "stranding" of public works men, on the completion of jobs, is a frequent cause of local distress. Others of the contractors' men drift away by all the great roads, using the Casual Wards and common lodging-houses on the way, attracted hither and thither by mere vague rumours that great engineering works are about to begin in this place or that.

(iii.) *Existing Agencies dealing with the Men of Discontinuous Employment*

For practically the whole class of men of discontinuous employment, whether building trades' operatives or navvies, or men in those parts of other industries in which employment is habitually discontinuous from employer to employer as well as from job to job—numbering at least 1,250,000 wage-earners, and possibly twice as many,—the existing agencies for preventing or providing for distress from unemployment are hopelessly inadequate, if not incurably inappropriate. The first method by which the more regularly employed and the better paid section of the Men of Discontinuous Employment have sought to fortify themselves against Unemployment is by Trade Union Insurance. But although a large proportion of the skilled artisans among them, and many thousands even of the labourers, are members of Trade Unions, hardly any of these societies, in these industries of discontinuous employment, find it possible to give regular Out-of-Work Pay. The amount of Unemployment in the winter, in the periods of depression, and in the frequent intervals between jobs, is relatively so large as to put such a benefit out of the reach of even the strongest Unions. To this rule there are but half a dozen exceptions. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, an old and highly

organised Trade Union, established in 1860, and now numbering 64,268 members, pays Unemployment Benefit on much the same lines as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, with the result that comparatively few carpenters apply to Distress Committees. But even this exceptional society, with nearly half a century of careful management behind it, finds this benefit an increasingly heavy burden, the payments for the whole of the past four years averaging nearly 25s. a year per member, involving a weekly contribution of nearly 6d. per week for Insurance against Unemployment alone, irrespective of sickness, superannuation, burial and strike pay. The result is that a certain proportion of men in each year exhaust the period of twenty-four weeks' benefit before they get into work again; a large number find it impossible to keep up their contributions, and accordingly in one of their intervals of Unemployment fall "out of benefit," whilst many others are prevented from joining. The result is that the membership of this Union has, since 1903, steadily declined, and is now falling at an alarming rate. During the year 1908 it lost nearly 100 members every week. There are now in the United Kingdom at least four times as many carpenters outside the Union as within it. In fact, experience has proved, not once or twice, but repeatedly, that in these trades where discontinuous employment is the rule, and where the employment is sporadic and ever shifting in locality, no system of Insurance is either financially or administratively practicable. The time lost in the intervals between jobs, in the recurrent seasonal slackness, and in the years of depression, is so considerable that an abnormally heavy premium has to be paid in the weeks when the men are at work. Such a premium would have to be specially heavy in the case of the labourers, who are the least well paid section, and who make up half of the whole.

There is, however, a further difficulty in the way of insurance against Unemployment which seems to us, *without some better organisation of the building and constructional trades*, to militate seriously against any attempt to provide Out-of-Work Pay for the Men of Discontinuous

Employment. Even if the men could afford, and could be induced to spare a premium sufficiently high to provide for their inevitable and recurrent periods of Unemployment, it is impossible, as things are, to make sure that the member drawing Out-of-Work Pay is actually doing his utmost to get employed, or even that he is made aware of the opportunities of re-employment. To the engineer or the boiler-maker every factory or shipyard is known, and the number of men required by every employer in the country can be ascertained by an efficient Trade Union office. But no trade organisation, however efficient, can discover as a matter of practice in which town or at which outskirts of a town building operations are beginning to develop, or where exactly a contractor has been set to make a motor track, to reclaim a marsh, to build a sea-wall, or begin or extend a line of railway. One of the hardships of this class is that they are bound, as things are, to go in search of work on mere rumour, and that this rumour may reach and affect the movements of dozens or hundreds of thousands of men all over the country quite independently of how many may be actually required at one particular work. The contractors, we were told, take only "the skeleton of their staff, that is, the whole of the timekeepers, the head walking foreman, and the gangers underneath. These are generally fairly regular men, although they may stand off occasionally for a month or so. The rest of the men have to go to the work haphazard as best they can." "Occasionally, advertisements appear in the papers," we were told by Mr. John Ward, M.P., who has had personal experience of the trade, "that a certain number of men are required on certain works, and I have known cases where there was not a man who could get a job. More than once I have seen that, and then, of course, they are hopelessly stranded, and it does create great difficulty in the neighbourhood." No trade organisation can discover whether its Unemployed members have actually applied for such work as there is, or why it is that out of the crowd of applicants for work the contractor's foreman picks one man and rejects another; and why, when he is reducing his staff, he discharges some

men weeks earlier than others. On these scattered works all over the country no Trade Union could even discover whether a man had been dismissed or had simply thrown up the job of his own accord. Thus, in the present anarchic condition of the building and constructional trades, Out-of-Work Benefit may easily prove a weapon of double edge. Where intervals of Unemployment are normal in the industrial life of every member of the trade, and where their duration is under no effective supervision and control, the power to draw Out-of-Work Pay may, by its subtle play upon motive, tend insidiously to slacken the effort to get another job as quickly as possible and to keep the job until it is completed, and thus actually lengthen the average interval between jobs and therefore the amount of Unemployment.

On the other hand, whilst Trade Union Insurance against Unemployment is, to this class, practically impossible, the "Employment Relief" offered by Distress Committees and Municipal Authorities is fatally attractive. The job of a few days or a few weeks on the Municipal Relief Works, repellent and not really useful to the men of Class I., just suits the less skilled, the less well-paid, the less regular, the less steady of the workers of Class II., and even the good men brought low by prolonged Unemployment. To the builders' labourers and navvies who make up the bulk of the men in distress from Unemployment belonging to this class, the construction of roads, the excavation of land, the planting of trees, the improvement of open spaces, the laying of drains, or the building of embankments—which is the work to which Local Authorities inevitably turn—is exactly the kind of occupation that they prefer. When they are put to such work alongside the heterogeneous crowd of Under-employed and Unemployable men, the very minimum of effort enables them to pass muster and even to gain the approval of the harassed superintendent. Even the Rural Colony, though it takes them away from their haunts, has familiar features to the man who is perpetually working on contractors' jobs in remote parts of the country. Though the wages earned on Relief Works do not equal the ordinary

earnings when working full time for a contractor, the men quickly discover the advantage of being paid without deductions in all weathers and without lost time. They appreciate the short hours and the low level of effort. Hence the builders' labourers and the navvies who happen to be in an interval between two jobs gleefully welcome the efforts of the Distress Committees to persuade Local Authorities to start public works for the Unemployed. If these works would not otherwise have been done, it means the clear gain of another job; if they are merely anticipated, at any rate it is a job in hand which is secure, as against the mere chance of a job at the normal time, which would very likely go to men following the successful contractor, men probably more vigorous, more steady, or at least more favoured by the foreman. What is unfortunate from the standpoint of the community is that when the Relief Works stop the builders' labourer or navvy finds himself exactly where he was when they began, but with the difference that more men have been attracted into this particular calling. While he has been working on the job of the Local Authority some other man has been called up or down from other sections of wage-earners to take his place on the job which may have been started meanwhile by the contractor for whom he is accustomed to work. And from among the heterogeneous crowd taken on by the Local Authority other men who have previously worked at other trades will have grown accustomed to, and perhaps fitted for, the work of the navvy or the labourer. If it is thought necessary that public works should be executed in periods of trade depression, in order to create employment for the building and constructional trades, it would clearly be more advantageous to the men of those trades, and to the community as a whole, that such works should be undertaken, not by Distress Committees, nor as Relief Works for the benefit of the men on particular local registers of persons in distress, but in the ordinary way, by the Departments usually ordering such works, and that they should be manned exclusively by the best of the men habitually employed in these trades, whom the foreman is able to engage in the manner to which they are accustomed.

Finally, whilst both "Trade Union Insurance and Employment Relief" are unavailable or inappropriate remedies for the Distress of the Men of 'Discontinuous Employment, we see that, from the very nature of the case, it is futile to attempt to grapple with the evil by seeking to get the men individually into work, or to move them to other parts of the country, or even to other parts of the Empire. What has to be remedied is not the Unemployment of the 5 or 10 per cent who happen to be on our hands at a particular time, but the fact that *all* the men are periodically unemployed, and that practically the whole number are subject occasionally to intervals between jobs so long as to produce distress even to the thrifty household. It is, in fact, not the woes of individual men, but the excessive discontinuity of the employment of the whole class, aggravated beyond all need by the absence of organisation and information, for which we have here to find a remedy.

(c) *Class III.—The Under-Employed*

In our First Class we had to deal with individuals who happened to be undergoing the experience—in their lives occasional only, and even rare—of being out of work. In our Second Class, we found the whole body normally and habitually out of work in the intervals between jobs; such intervals occurring every few weeks or months, involving a chronic "leakage" in loss of time and wages, and being, in the course of the lifetime of nearly every man, occasionally so prolonged as to create acute distress. Now that we come to our Third Class we have to face the problem of a whole population of manual workers who are, year in and year out, week by week, continuously in a state of partial destitution of the necessities of life owing to their chronic failure to get a full week's work. This is not Unemployment in the ordinary sense, but something which (as we shall see) is, in its social effects, even worse. It is not a case of the man being alternately fully at work and fully at leisure. His whole life is absorbed, either in work, or in looking or waiting for work; but he does not get his

time paid for. It represents "at bottom not so much want of employment as a wrong distribution of employment, a spreading, say, of 3000 days' work in a week over 1000 men at three days each instead of over 500 men at six days each."

(i.) *The Casual Labourer.*

The evil of Under-employment is shown in its most common form in the great class of Casual Labourers. These men hold no situations. They are engaged, day by day, and often hour by hour, for brief and discontinuous jobs; sometimes mainly by one employer for successive jobs, but more usually by a shifting series of different employers, often in different occupations. The bulk of the work is, in fact, unskilled labouring; and it is so specialised that men habitually work in succession for employers carrying on different industries.

The Casual Labourer assumes, here and there, slightly specialised characteristics. We need not describe the hackneyed figure of the "Docker," so well known as the man who struggles in East London at the dock-gates for the privilege of being taken on at sixpence an hour, for a few hours' job at unloading goods from the ship's hold, and wheeling or carrying them into the warehouses that line the dock quays. We find practically the same type, under slightly varying conditions, at every large port, notably at Liverpool, Bristol, and Hull, and to the list we must now add Manchester, where, starting afresh, the evil might have been avoided. The Casual Labourers of the wharves and landing-places by whom the bulk of the port and riverside work of all kinds is everywhere performed belong to essentially the same class. Here, too, must come the large class of porters, labourers, and "odd job men" who pick up a living at the various markets for cattle, meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, hay and straw, etc., in London, and all market towns, great or small. Some other towns, like Middlesborough, have a considerable population of Casual Labourers and "spare hands," who hang about the wharves and furnaces on the chance of occasional jobs.

"This," we are told, "is especially the case in the large iron and steel works, where often an influx of work means the setting on of men who must be dismissed as soon as the pressing order is completed." In the great centres of commerce there is a whole class of Casual Warehousemen. "There is," says Mr. Rathbone, "another class of semi-skilled labour in Liverpool which is even more casual in its nature than that of the *bona fide* dock labourer. I refer to the warehouse porter and other similar employments. In the case of a warehouse it is utterly impossible as a rule for the warehouseman himself to tell from day to day how many men he may require the following morning. He may have a heavy stock of any particular class of goods in his warehouse, the owner of which may sell it, say late in the afternoon, the order is passed through and the carrier applies for delivery first thing in the morning. The warehouseman thus requires a considerable number of men ; but for days on end, even although he has a heavy stock in his warehouse, he may not require more than one or two hands besides himself to attend to sampling orders, and such small matter of that kind." Every railway company has, for the goods traffic of its principal stations, its set of extra men, who get taken on for a few hours, or for a day or two, whenever there is pressure of business. But apart from the docks owned or worked by railway companies, where the labour is as casual as at other docks, the Companies vary in the extent to which they rely on casual labour. At the Marylebone terminus of the Great Central, the men on the permanent staff (average weekly totals for 1906-7) numbered 155 ; the regularly employed men not on the staff, 42 ; and the casuals no fewer than 117 ; and these latter got, on an average, only 28 hours' work per week. More than 37 per cent of the whole work was done by these casuals. On the other hand, the King's Cross Goods Depot of the Great Northern had less than 3 per cent of casuals. In July 1906, "about 200 extra porters, etc., were taken on at Euston, in addition to 200 extra men taken on for the rest of the Euston section, which extends to Stafford. The majority of these extra men are only wanted for the very heavy pressure between

July 20th and August 12th; but from June 1st the staff is gradually increased, and after August 12th is diminished to about September 15th, when it becomes normal."

The "casualness" of the employment of the Casual Labourer is aggravated by the competition for jobs by men belonging to other trades, who happen to be unemployed and in distress. A skilled mechanic does not do "labouring" unless he is hard pushed. But turning over a batch of record papers of unemployed carpenters we note men who are reduced to "working at the shipping" (*i.e.* dock labour); to "labouring at 17s. per week"; to being "employed as a labourer at 18s. per week"; to "the work of a general labourer at one of the timber yards rather than go on Unemployed Benefit"; to "working as a labourer"; to "discharging timber ships, which is only labouring"; to "navvying for the Corporation," etc. The lower sections of the building trades, notably the painters, the scaffolders, the builders' labourers and the navvies, who may be said to be normally in employment, though in very discontinuous employment, habitually work as casual labourers, when they cannot get work in their trades of building and construction, and when they are sufficiently in distress to be willing to change their habits. Indeed, the boundary between Class II. and Class III. is at this point obscure. In all periods of depression a considerable proportion of the section of builders' labourers find themselves employed in their own trade for such short spells—often only for a few hours at a time—and so rarely obtaining forty or fifty hours' work in a week, that their condition really amounts to one, not of Discontinuous Employment, but of chronic Under-employment.

The want of employment of the Casual Labourer is, according to many witnesses, at present being aggravated by a declining demand for mere muscular effort. "It is," we are informed, "now increasingly true that machinery is displacing the purely unskilled labourer, and causing a demand for men of more general ability and reliable character, and affording them more regular employment. The 'Scotsman' and the 'cran' in the building trade. the

mechanical stoker in gas-works, the steam crane, the grain elevator, etc., at the docks, and the motor bus or trolley, are materially diminishing the demand for unskilled labour in London."

(ii.) *The Fringe of Casuals about Skilled Trades*

But the class of Under-employed includes not merely the whole of the men in such occupations as dock and wharf labour and market porters, and a waxing and waning share of the lower grades of the building operatives, but also a very extensive fringe of men more or less attached to particular industries, and working at them only by way of brief and casual jobs. "'To go in' for one half-a-day, one day, two, three, four, or five days out of the five and a half is common to bootmaking, coopering, galvanising, tank-making, oil pressing, sugar boiling, piano-making, as it is to dock labouring, stevedoring, crane lifting, building." Some trades, like that of the London bakers, regularly employ more men on one or two days of the week than on others. In London "a large body of men is always required for the Friday night baking," when "the work . . . in preparation for Saturday and Sunday is, we are told, exceedingly heavy. The usual hours of working are fifteen or sixteen instead of ten of other nights, and *twice as many* men are required." These Friday night men, many hundreds in number, pick up odd jobs the rest of the week. "At the factory gates every night during the week a number of men are always hanging about ready to be taken on in an emergency, or to fill the place of any man who, according to a very common custom, has 'taken a night off.'" In busy marketing neighbourhoods, a whole class of butchers' assistants are engaged only for Fridays and Saturdays. Analogous arrangements exist in many other trades. Moreover, in every trade there are men whom the employer takes on only when he has a sudden and temporary press of business. They may be the "glut men" of the Customs Department or the Christmas hands of the Post Office. Every tramway undertaking,

municipal or commercial, has its reserve of extra drivers, conductors, yard-men, washers, etc., who get a day's work now and then when they are wanted. At Liverpool, and indeed in all large towns, there is a whole class of casual carmen who are taken on for the job as required.

(iii.) *The Under-Employment of Declining Trades*

These ascending grades of lifelong "casuals" are not the only sections of wage-earners who suffer the distress due to Under-employment. There are the trades in which, whether owing to a persistent falling-off of the demand, or to some change of process, Under-employment has become chronic and almost universal. What is elsewhere the lot only of the fringe of casual hands, becomes in these trades the misfortune of practically all the workers employed. Though few may be wholly Out of Work, hardly any get a full week's employment; and the whole trade may thus pass (as did the Framework Knitters and the Hand-loom Silk and Woollen Weavers) into a condition in which, throughout the whole year, each man gets only a few days' earnings a week. This is, apparently, in our present industrial anarchy a constant phenomenon. The particular trades that are suffering vary from decade to decade, but there seems no time at which the evil cannot be traced in some locality or another. At present, as we gather, the boot and shoe-making trade is, to a great extent, in this condition, owing to the rapidly changing processes involved in the successive introduction of machine after machine. Even where men are not altogether displaced they are finding, in some centres, their work becoming so intermittent as to amount to chronic Under-employment. Much the same state of Under-employment appears to exist to-day in some centres of the hosiery trade, also owing to the shifting of the industry. A similar state of chronic Under-employment has long prevailed in some of the branches of the leather trade in Bermondsey owing to the shifting of the fell-mongering and tanning. It is even

a question whether certain sections of so extensive and so widespread an industry as the building trade may not be falling into a chronic state of Under-employment, owing to changes in processes. It may be that the carpenters and joiners have become too numerous for the work to be done, now that concrete floors and steel joists have come in ; that the bricklayers and stone-masons are in process of supersession by the workers in "reinforced concrete" and steel-frame erections ; whilst the plasterers are, in face of a double change of fashion as well as of processes, finding their work dwindling to a vanishing point. There are actual signs that, in London at any rate, the prolonged Unemployment of the carpenters and bricklayers is out of all proportion to the shrinking of building operations. Statistics as to the number of building operations reported to the District Surveyors in the Administrative County of London, and as to their aggregate rateable value (which furnish some imperfect index to their extent), indicate that the reduction in the amount of building between 1899 and 1905 was inappreciable, and that of 1906-7 not great. On the other hand the percentage of Unemployment among London carpenters has risen steadily from 1899 out of all correspondence with the amount of building. Moreover, there is some evidence that it is worse among these skilled craftsmen than among the labourers.

(iv.) *The Social Evil of Under-Employment*

All these sections and subdivisions (and, indeed, many more, for no one has yet completely explored the whole field) come, from our present standpoint, within one and the same class of Under-employed. Of its numerical extent there are no available statistics. It is, in the main, a town phenomenon, and one characteristic principally of towns of large size, though it is not wholly absent anywhere. Confining ourselves to adult men, we cannot estimate the number in the United Kingdom who are, to-day, thus holding no situations, continuous or dis-

continuous, but are existing on casual jobs of brief duration, and who habitually do not get a full week's work, at less than between one and two millions.

The existence of this large class of Under-employed men, living on casual jobs, and habitually unable to obtain anything like a full week's work, is universally recognised to be a grave social evil. Their average earnings for the year are so low that even with careful management they are unable to procure for themselves and their families the necessities of healthy life. They are the occupants of the overcrowded one- and two-roomed homes of London and Glasgow, Newcastle and Plymouth. They fill the cellar dwellings which are the shame of Liverpool. Their families contribute the great majority of the 49,000 children who were being fed at school in London in the winter of 1907-8, and of the much larger number who are being similarly fed in a hundred towns in the winter of 1908-9. Among them privation and exposure, and the insanitary conditions of their dwellings, lead to an excessive prevalence of diseases of all kinds. It is, to an extent quite disproportionate to their actual numbers, they who fill the hospitals and infirmaries, and keep the city's death-rate at a high figure. It is in their households, particularly, that the infantile death-rate is excessive; that the children have rickets; and that an altogether premature invalidity is the rule. It is recognised, in short, that it is among the class of the Under-employed casual labourers—constituting, perhaps, only a tenth of the whole town—that four-fifths of the problems of the Medical Officer of Health arise.

More important even than the adverse effects of casual employment upon physical health, are, in our view, its demoralising effects upon character. The perpetual discontinuity of the work, with its intervening spells of idle loafing, is in itself deteriorating. "The irregularity and uncertainty of the weekly work and income," deposed one witness, "act in the most demoralising way. It weakens the desire, and finally the ability to undertake regular work. The loafing habits that it entails undoubtedly lead to more gambling and drinking than need otherwise go

on." "It is a sort of feast and famine with them," said another witness. "The effects are that the men get into a loafing habit and will not have regular work, and eventually do not like any work at all." The fact that the work is done for a shifting succession of different employers makes zeal, fidelity, and even honest effort of practically no account. In the majority of cases, nothing in the nature of a "character" is required before employment can be gained. The intermittent stream of jobs, on which livelihood depends, comes along, plentifully or scantily as the case may be, without any regard to individual merit; success in "catching the foreman's eye," and getting picked out of the struggling crowd, may come, indeed, more frequently to the physically strong man of dissolute habits and brutal instincts than to the more refined nature. Amid the evil influences of such a life no personal character is likely to be able to maintain itself against temptation. Accordingly, whenever we have casual employment, we find drunkenness and every irregularity of life more than usually prevalent. Nor is the evil influence of casual employment confined to the man. It seems almost inevitable that the home should also become demoralised. Among these casual labourers, we were informed, "the uncertainty of the amount that will be earned in any week, and the impossibility experienced by the wife and family of ascertaining what has been actually earned, contribute, we have no doubt, much more largely than can be estimated, to the shiftlessness and the general misery." In fact, not even the most careful housekeeping could stand up against the irregularity of the income day by day available. In one ascertained case, "for instance, 8s. 4d. was earned in one week in the following way: Monday, a whole day's work, 5s.; Tuesday, one hour, 8d.; Thursday, four hours, 2s. 8d. When the money comes in such small, uncertain amounts, it would be difficult for the most thrifty housekeeper to expend it to the best advantage. . . . In these households . . . a heavy responsibility rests on the wife. It is a serious thing to find this responsibility held so frequently in such light esteem, while the habit of drinking among the women

undoubtedly leads to more neglect and suffering for the children than anything else."

Gravest of all, in our opinion, is the effect that this demoralising irregularity of life is having upon the hundreds of thousands of children who are being brought up in the homes of the Under-employed. The elaborate investigation made by the London County Council into the circumstances of the families whose children need to be fed at school brings to light, not only that it is very largely the offspring of Under-employed casual labourers who are thus growing up stunted, under-nourished and inadequately clothed; but also that, in the vast majority of the cases, the children lack, not food and clothes alone, but even a low minimum of home care. It is these children who, in the main, fill the Industrial and Reformatory Schools. It is these children who furnish the 10 per cent of "regular irregulars" that are the despair of the Public Elementary School. Needless to say, it is these children who, in the main, when they grow up, recruit the ranks of unskilled and largely of casual labour. As one well-informed witness deposed before us, the irregularity and uncertainty of the life "has a deplorable effect on the children of the casual labourer, who are quick to follow the parental example, and decline to take up regular work or learn a trade when they leave school."

(v.) *The Swamping of the Distress Committees by the Under-employed*

All these features of the grave social evil that this class of the Under-employed constitutes to-day are widely recognised and well known. They acquired for us a special significance when it was pressed upon our attention that it was this same class of chronically Under-employed casual labourers that, as a matter of fact, furnished year by year the bulk of the applicants to the Distress Committees under the Unemployed Workmen Act. "The great bulk of applicants to Distress Committees," deposed a member of the Central (Unemployed) Body, "are men normally in or on the verge of distress,

men earning perhaps fair daily wages, *but getting on an average only two or three days' work in a week, or two or three weeks in a month.*" An examination of the registers of these Committees, in all the hundred towns of England, Scotland and Ireland in which they exist, reveals, with remarkable identity, that about one-half of all the distressed applicants are men whose only means of livelihood is casual labour. "We have nearly everywhere received the same general impression," report our Special Investigators, "namely, that the bulk of the applicants to Distress Committees are men of the labouring class, *who have for years, been accustomed to casual work.* A large proportion are chronic cases who are always in and out of employment"—that is to say, belong to our Class III.—"and by no means the class of regular workers who have lost jobs in which they have been long employed owing to exceptional depression of trade"—our Class I. We have to conclude, in short, that at least half the task of the Distress Committees has been to relieve, not the unemployed of our Class I., for whom the Unemployed Workmen Act was designed; nor yet the Unemployed of our Class II., who need only to be tided over an unusually prolonged interval between two engagements of some duration; but to supply the clamant wants of the Unemployed of our Class III.—men whose chronic condition is one of partial destitution tempered by odd jobs

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(vi.) *Under-Employment the Main Cause of Pauperism*

What brings the problem presented by this class of the Under-employed even more vividly home to us is that we have discovered, on quite irrefragable testimony, that it is from the same class that is directly drawn at least two-thirds of all the pauperism, other than that of old age, sickness, widowhood and orphanage; and, probably, if we include indirect results, at least as large a proportion also of these parts of pauperism. We were, at the outset of our inquiries, struck by the fact that there was evidently going on a *constant manufacture of paupers.* It became apparent, from a consideration of the entering stream of

persons relieved for the first time, that, even if we could to-day kill or deport, or otherwise remove every existing pauper between the ages of sixteen and sixty, we should, if we made no other change, within ten or twelve years find as great a number on our hands as at present. In view of this grave fact, it seemed to us of less importance to consider what was being done to the existing paupers, *than to discover what it was that was creating them.* We accordingly appointed three sets of Special Investigators—one to inquire into the Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism; another to inquire into the effects of Outdoor Relief upon Wages; and a third to inquire into the Effects of Employment and Assistance of the Unemployed. In addition we were led, as we have already mentioned, to the appointment of other Investigators to inquire into the condition of the Children whom the Guardians were maintaining on Outdoor Relief and in institutions respectively. The outcome of these investigations was all the more impressive in that it was not what we anticipated. We do not exaggerate when we say that all these inquirers—numbering, with their assistants, more than a dozen, starting on different lines of investigation, and pursuing their researches independently all over the kingdom—came, without concert, to the same conclusion, namely, that of all the causes or conditions predisposing to pauperism, the most potent, the most certain, and the most extensive in its operation was this method of employment in odd jobs. Contrary to the expectations of some of our number and of some of themselves, our Investigators did not find that low wages could be described, generally speaking, as a cause of pauperism. They were unable to satisfy themselves that insanitary conditions of living or excessive hours of labour could be shown to be, on any large scale, a cause of pauperism. They could find practically no ground for believing that Outdoor Relief, by adversely affecting wages, was itself a cause of pauperism. It could not even be shown that an extravagant expenditure on drink, or a high degree of occasional drunkenness—habits of which the evil consequences can scarcely be exaggerated. and

which are ruinous to individuals in all grades—were at all invariably accompanied or followed by pauperism. All these conditions, injurious though they are in other respects, were not found, *if combined with reasonable regularity of employment*, to lead in any marked degree to the creation of pauperism. Thus, the regularly employed railway porters, lowly paid as they are, contribute only infinitesimally to pauperism. Even the agricultural labourers, in receipt, perhaps, of the lowest money wages of any section of the wage-earners, do not nowadays, so far as they belong to the section in regular employment, contribute largely to the pauperism of adult able-bodied life. Again, though the average consumption of alcoholic drink among the miners, the boilermakers, the iron and steel workers, and many other trades appears to be enormous, these trades do not contribute largely to pauperism. On the other hand, where high earnings and short hours and healthy conditions are combined with the method of casual employment—as is the case with some sections of wharf and riverside labourers, and of the men who labour in connection with furnaces and gasworks—there we find demoralisation of character, irregularity of life, and a constant recruiting of the pauper army. “It is from the casual labour class,” sums up the Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, “that those who fall upon the Poor Law, Relief Works or Charitable Funds are mostly drawn.”

(vii.) *The Cause of the Constant Existence of an Under-employed Class*

Hence we were led to study the phenomenon of Under-employment with some care. We found, as has been demonstrated by the series of admirable researches carried on by Mr. W. H. Beveridge, that this chronic over-supply of casual labour in relation to the local demand was produced and continued, irrespective of any excess of population or depression of trade, *by the method by which the employers engaged their casual workers*. This method inevitably creates and perpetuates what have been called ‘stagnant pools’ of labour, in which there is nearly

always some reserve of labour left, however great may be the employer's demand. We may illustrate this by a glaring example. The Liverpool employers of dock labourers take on the men they require, at irregular and uncertain hours, at eighteen different "stands" situated at a considerable distance from each other. Around each "stand" there tends to collect a particular crowd of labourers, who usually work for the shipowners using that "stand," and who get more or less known to their foremen. The chance of employment induces at least as many men to attach themselves to each "stand" as are called for at that "stand" on its busy days. Indeed, it would not suit the employer not to find as many men there as he ever requires. When the call comes, and a certain number of men are taken on, the others do not like to go off to other "stands," partly because these are probably just as well supplied with men, and partly because they might, by their absence, miss a chance of being employed at their own "stand," with the result of weakening their hold on the foreman's acquaintance, and, perhaps, also (as he likes to be sure of there being a large enough crowd for any emergency) on his favour. Now, as the busiest days at particular "stands" do not come simultaneously, and have individually no necessary coincidence with the busiest days for the port as a whole, the result of the creation of the eighteen "stagnant pools" is that the total number of men collected in them (though perhaps not more than enough in each case to satisfy the maximum demand of the "stand") is plainly far greater than the maximum demand of the port as a whole on its very busiest day—it is estimated at half as much again. Thus it is that there are estimated to be something like 15,000 dock and quayside labourers in Liverpool, all of them chronically under-employed, to do work which never, on the busiest day of the port, needs more than 10,000. Much the same conditions prevailed at the London Docks twenty years ago, in spite of the fact that the labourers were everywhere engaged by a single employer (the Dock Company). Men were taken on at each gate at irregular hours, and according to the demand at that particular

part of the docks. Largely at the instance of Mr. Charles Booth, the Dock Company was induced to do the greater part of its work by a staff of labourers equal to the minimum requirements of the docks as a whole at the slackest time, to whom regular employment was given; and a further staff of preference men, who were taken on in the numbers required for the regular busy seasons; leaving only the margin of work to be distributed to the fringe of casual labourers. The result is that the work of the London and India Docks Company (which forms, however, only a small proportion of the dock and wharf labour of London) is now spread over a much smaller number of individual men than was formerly the case, and these are much more fully employed. Attempts to adopt a similar plan at Liverpool have so far failed, partly because of the difficulty of combining the large number of shipowners who there employ the labourers, and partly because of the opposition of the labourers themselves, because each of them fears to be squeezed out by any reform that regularises the labour of the fortunate half, and thus left without even his present gambling chance of a job.

Even in London, however, matters have been little mended. The demoralising struggle for work still goes on. There are indications that the London and India Dock Company and the Millwall Dock Company have, together, about 7000 men in attendance; the Surrey Commercial Dock Company, 2000; the shipowners employing their own labourers, 5000; and the various wharves, 10,000; making, on the roughest of estimates, something like 24,000 in all. Yet the maximum number of men employed by all these employers, taken together, on any one day in 1906 was only 14,482. It appears as if this number of men, properly distributed, would suffice to meet the demands of the busiest day. There might, accordingly, be a surplus of 9600 wholly dispensed with, apart from any improvement in organisation of the work. The mean number employed during the year, taking averages for each month, was only 11,935; so that it might conceivably be possible, by improved organisation

of the work, to dispense with anything up to 2500 more. It is significant to notice that it is not the fluctuations of work from day to day, *in the port as a whole*, that cause the bulk of the irregularity of employment. This only varies from about 11,000 to 15,000; and might, therefore, apart from any improvement in the organisation of the business, cause 4000 to be occasionally idle. What causes nearly 10,000 men to be constantly in attendance in excess of the maximum requirements of the port as a whole, and causes nearly all the 24,000 to be chronically under-employed, is merely the lack of organisation of the hiring of labourers and of the necessary reserve.

We have described the case of the London and Liverpool Dock labourer in detail, because the connection between the method of engagement and the chronic state of Under-employment is there close, obvious and undoubted. But the dock labourer presents only one example of what is common to the whole range of the one to two millions of men who are chronically Under-employed. In almost every great industry we find the employer or his foreman—partly from a sense of the convenience of being able at any moment to get all the labour he requires for an urgent demand, but mainly, as we prefer to believe, without actually realising what he is doing—tending to attract outside his wharf, or at his factory gates, or on the list of persons to whom he gives out work, or to whom he sends a postcard when he has a job, a group of workers who look principally to him for employment, on whom he relies as extra hands to meet the emergencies of his busiest days, and who, therefore (whether through their fears of missing a chance of work from him, or because he likes to be sure of a sufficient reserve), do not easily seek work elsewhere. In fact, as we have been told, “Employers sometimes object to men whom they employ habitually (not regularly) working for a rival employer, even on off-days.” Nevertheless, as we have it in evidence, “Employers with a fluctuating demand for labour do not as a rule keep a regular staff, even up to the minimum number required on their slackest day. A wharfinger requiring daily from 100 to 200 men will per-

haps have only 50 regular men, and will use the other 50 places that might have been permanent in order to keep together a reserve for emergencies. Sometimes this takes shape in a very definite plan of giving out work in rotation." Each wharfinger, each contractor, each manufacturer, each giver-out of work to be done at home, each builder's foreman, tends thus to accumulate his own reserve of labour, his own "stagnant pool" from which he draws to satisfy the maximum demands of his business. But as the busiest days of the different employers even in the same trade do not exactly coincide in time—as the busiest seasons of different trades occur at different parts of the year—the aggregate of these individual reserves of casual labour is far in excess of what is actually required by the industry of the country as a whole, *even on the busiest day of the year*. Hence the chronic Under-employment, varied by brief spells of work under pressure, of all the casual workers. Thus, as Mr. Beveridge rightly says, "the main force keeping together this under-employed reserve of labour is *the casual demand of a multiplicity of individual employers*. *Each employer has his own group of hangers-on at his gate, instead of all employers sharing a common reserve drawn from one centre.*"

The evil effects of this method of engaging labour, which leads to each employer having a Stagnant Pool of his own, may be aggravated in various ways. Sometimes, out of a mistaken philanthropy, or it may be out of a deliberate desire "to keep as many men about them as possible, in order to keep up an unlimited supply upon which to draw," the employer or his foreman takes means to "spread the work" or "share the jobs." But there are graver abuses. The system gives a valuable patronage to the foreman, which sometimes leads to the exaction of bribes, and is often, we are informed, the real obstacle to its reform. "The master porter, foreman, or other who has to get work done is much helped if he is always conferring a favour upon the man he employs, and a very marked favour upon those whom he employs frequently or constantly. This we believe to be the real objection to the schemes for diminishing the irregularity of employ-

ment in the docks and warehouses of Liverpool by an association among the employers of this kind of labour, so ably and powerfully urged by the leading men of that city for many years. The men responsible for getting the work done are afraid to give the men security of tenure, for fear lest it should weaken their power over them." In fact, as we were informed, "the whole foreman system—however convenient from a business point of view—undoubtedly has the effect of keeping groups of men waiting about individual foremen, and thus, as a whole, increasing the leakage of time between jobs and the total volume of labour in an occupation. The system increases enormously the uncertainty of employment. Men in the building trades, and even under local authorities, may be thrown out after years of fairly constant work by the death or removal of a particular foreman. The system undoubtedly lends itself to much abuse of patronage, and encourages convivial drinking as a means of 'keeping in' with the foremen."

But it is not only the selfishness of the employer or the corrupt interests of a foreman that perpetuates the evil of each employer having his own reserve, or his own Stagnant Pool of Under-employed labour. Sometimes it is the employer who objects to, and the men who insist on, the system by which the men work only a few days per week. Sir Hugh Bell, for instance, has repeatedly explained how seriously the great firm of Bell Brothers and Company, Limited, loses by the men's irregularity of attendance. More frequently both employers and employed prefer the demoralising system. Many of the casual workers, reports one of our committees, like the gambling nature of Under-employment. They earn high hourly rates, "and can break their employment for a day or two whenever they like without its permanent loss. The shipowners have a plentiful supply of good labour for permanent employ, and a great reservoir of inferior labour for exceptional or sudden wants. Neither side, therefore, wishes to disturb a practice which in some respects suits them, and thus a system is allowed to continue which is wasteful of labour, demoralising to those not constantly in employ,

terribly hard on the wives and children, and the main source of pauperism and its attendant evils in a vast population of nearly 750,000." Finally the men get into such a state that, even when they earn only low rates per hour, and are actually in distress, they are unable to remain continuously at work. "There is little doubt," report our Investigators, "that a number of men object to regular and continuous work. There has been much evidence of men leaving the relief work after a few days nominally for other jobs, but, as was shown, when they were revisited at a later date, really because they were tired of it."

(viii.) *Existing Agencies dealing with the Under-employed*

We do not think it necessary, in the light of the preceding pages, to dwell at any length upon the utter inappropriateness and inadequacy of the existing agencies for dealing with the distress of the Under-employed. If the provision of Out of Work Pay by Trade Union Insurance is impossible for the Men of Discontinuous Employment, it is obviously still more out of the reach of the Under-employed. In no way can it be ascertained at present whether the casual labourer who professes to be starving has really sought the thousand and one odd jobs for unskilled labour which are offered each morning, and every hour of the day, in any great city. In no way, at present, can it be proved, on any particular day, what is the surplus of men seeking jobs, over and above the aggregate of jobs that are being offered, somewhere or other in the 300 square miles of commercial and industrial London, or the 50 to 100 square miles of the business and manufacturing aggregations at Liverpool and Manchester, among the thickly clustered towns of the Black Country and the Clyde estuary, in the West Riding and along Tyneside. Yet without some check of this kind, no system of Unemployment Insurance, by whomsoever organised, and no provision of Out of Work Pay, by whomsoever provided, could possibly be maintained. The same diffi-

culty of ascertaining and identifying the real surplus hampers equally the Distress Committees and the Municipal Authorities in providing Employment Relief, and discourages both private almsgiving and the grant of Outdoor Relief. All these expedients for meeting the distress and destitution to which the Under-employed are reduced—inevitable as it may be to resort to them in emergencies, when nothing better can be done—have the drawback of positively aggravating the evil. Individuals are temporarily relieved at the expense of perpetuating, and even increasing, the vicious Under-employment system itself. The same is true of the mistaken philanthropist's device of "sharing work," or giving each man work for half a day or half a week only, or taking the work in rotation. This, which has long been a device of the Under-employed themselves, as well as of their employers, really enlarges the circle of those condemned to chronic Under-employment. For the essential evil of the whole system of engaging labour for casual jobs, and of each employer tending to accentuate his own reserve or his own Stagnant Pool of labour, is the retention, in a particular district, of a much larger number of men, expecting such jobs, than are required for the performance of the whole of the jobs on the busiest day. What is required is some improvement in organisation which stops the waste of unemployed time, and more accurately adjusts the supply of labour to the demand. Whether we give doles of Municipal Employment, doles of Outdoor Relief, or doles of alms—whether we spread the work or share out the jobs among all who clamour for them—we do nothing to effect any such adjustment. This or that individual is temporarily fed who would otherwise starve. But the system, which necessarily involves a constant surplus of labourers and their chronic Under-employment, is not changed; and by the silent enlargement of the Stagnant Pools that goes on if the men are maintained, the evil has been even increased.

(D) *Are Women Unemployed?*

We have so far left unmentioned the case of women who are to be found, of course, in each of our classes, and whose sufferings from industrial disorganisation are certainly no less than those of men. We have found it impossible to obtain any statistics as to the number of women in distress from Unemployment. Women constitute only a small fraction of the applicants to Distress Committees; perhaps because these Committees have so far been able to afford them little help. Able-bodied women without husbands or young children are nowadays scarcely to be found in the Workhouses. Just at the time when the number of Able-bodied Men in the Workhouse is seriously increasing, the number of Able-bodied Unencumbered Women—at one time considerable—has fallen away to next to nothing. This is all the more significant in view of the fact that the number of Able-bodied Women, unencumbered with husbands or children, who are in receipt of Outdoor Relief is very small.

So far as women suffer distress from Unemployment, they are distributed among our three classes in quite different proportions from the men. In Class I., Women from Permanent Situations, we find, beyond individual cases here and there, practically none. The greatest occupation of this kind for women is domestic service; and in this there seems to be a chronic state of unsatisfied demand—a demand accompanied, however, by the requirement of residence in the employer's family, which seriously narrows the sources of supply. The large number of women now employed in all great cities in offices, warehouses, shops and restaurants—as distinguished from those employed in the actual processes of manufacture—usually hold regular situations at weekly wages. These, so far as we can discover, are—so great and growing is the demand—seldom in distress from Unemployment; though occasionally losing time from “leakages” between situations. Of Class II., Women of Discontinuous Employment, although individuals exist here and there, there is no whole trade comparable with the building trade operatives or the

navvies; unless we may include here those female hotel servants who habitually take "season" engagements. Practically the whole of the women in distress from Unemployment belong to our Class III., the Under-employed, their case being usually aggravated by seasonal rather than by cyclical fluctuations of trade.

From Unemployment of this kind—seasonal slackness, resulting in prolonged Under-employment—women suffer to an even greater extent than men. We were supplied by the Women's Industrial Council with much useful information on this point:—

"We have a good many replies from unions in the textile trade in Lancashire, etc., where the record usually is, that for the past two or three years almost every available woman and girl has been able to find work in the mills, as they are so busy. The Hyde and Hadfield Weavers' Association, however, reports 150 female members unemployed now, out of a total of 5000, and the numbers unemployed during the past year average from 100 to 200. These women are cotton weavers, winders and warpers, and some have been out for three months, some more, owing to the introduction of Northrop looms and other labour-saving machinery. The Bury Cardblowing and Ringroom Operatives' Association has sixteen cardroom operatives out of work now, out of 600 female members, and has had sixty-eight during the past year. The Todmorden and District Weavers' and Winders' Association has 100 unemployed out of about 1000 female members, and has had 150 during the past year as the result of a strike. The Hyde and District Cardblowing Room Operatives' and Ring Spinners' Association has about eight unemployed now out of 1400, and has had about forty during the year. . . . The Cigar Makers' Union reports about seventy-four unemployed now out of a membership of 894 females. A correspondent in the cigar trade in the Midlands reports that the trade has suffered very much in Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester, especially as cigars have, for some reason (probably cheapness), been replaced by the vogue of cigarette smoking. The two trades are quite separate, the cigar makers being highly skilled workers who are usually apprenticed for five years, during which they get very low wages, and some of these girls have turned their hands to dressmaking or working at the Dunlop rubber mills, etc. Many of them were married women. The secretary of the Clothiers' Operatives of Leeds reports that the clothing trade is very different to most other trades, as the females are generally on piecework, and, no matter how slack work is, they are not discharged. Therefore the number of unemployed is no guide as to

the state of the labour market. A Preston correspondent tells us that dressmakers and milliners suffer from seasonal slackness, expecting, indeed, two or three months' loss of work in a year, and that some of these went into the mills in the less arduous departments when they were finding their own trade slack, and that some of them are remaining 'here so as not to risk out-of-work periods again. Upholsterers report a slack period in November, January and February; whilst the shirt and collar makers in Taunton say that "there is a slack period of four or five months in the summer." Clerks and shop-assistants both give account of a good many out of work. The Aberdeen Shop Assistants' Branch paid unemployed benefit to two women out of forty-four during the past year; one, a milliner for one week, and the other, a saleswoman in a fruit-shop, for twelve weeks. Another, a London branch, reports two out of work now, and nine during the past year, for periods varying from three to twelve weeks, out of a total of fifty-two female members."

In London valuable testimony was given by philanthropic workers among girls and women.

"Miss Cheetham, Canning Town Settlement, puts roughly three facts:—

(i.) That all the working girls in our clubs give evidence of short time during the late winter. The girls I questioned last week belonged to—(a) jam; (b) paper; (c) match; (d) mat; (e) pickle; (f) baking-powder (factories); (g) shirt-making. Every one of these girls had been on short time for part or the whole of the winter in some departments of their work, at any rate, with the result that those girls who, when working full time, can earn about 12s. a week, have for many months now averaged not more than 9s. weekly.

(ii.) Those women, widows, etc., who earn their living by taking in shirt-making and tailoring to do at their own homes, all complain of slackness of work, so that they could not get the work, much less earn a livelihood by it. Have seen much distress amongst these shirt-makers this winter, and we have had no work-room open to help them!

(iii.) There is very little charring or washing to be had in a district like Canning Town, few being able to afford to pay wages. Even the laundries have been slack and have had to discharge hands. . . .

The club which makes the most special point of interesting itself in the industrial welfare as well as moral welfare of its members, the Jewish Working Girls' Club, Dean Street, Soho, reports that it has 375 members, 341 of whom work for wages; that about twenty are unemployed now, and that during the past

year about 200 have been unemployed for periods of from one week to three months. The unemployment occurred in the dress-making, millinery, tailoring and corset-making trades, and was due to seasonal slackness. There is an employment bureau connected with the club, and employment was found for 152 girls last year, some of them being cases of unemployment. Many girls learn secondary trades in the club, and they try to make a little out of this work. . . .

A Mission at Seven Dials has about 200 women and girls connected with it, a large number being employed at Crosse and Blackwell's. Work here is seasonal and the girls are often out. They fill in their time in various ways, a large proportion going to cardboard-box making under other women who have piecework. Others go to seed-sorting at Carter's and other large seed merchants. A club in the City Road returns thirty-five workers, of whom four are now out of work, fifteen have been out for periods of two or three weeks during the past year, their work being that of upholsterers, sweet-fillers, paper-folders, hawkers, and in Lipton's."

From Euston Road Miss Bunting reports that :

"Many of the girls were on three-quarter or even half-time for weeks and weeks during the winter. The tailoresses, of course; the liquorice girls at various intervals; Maple's carpet-weavers for nearly six months had slack work; between Christmas and Easter the rest of them had three days a week at home constantly. Schoolbred's carpet-sewers were so slack before Christmas that our girls left. One got work elsewhere, one went to service."

The difficulties created by the "seasonal" fluctuations in the volume of the employment in nearly all the manufacturing industries in which women are engaged are increased by the extremely low rates of remuneration for women's work of this kind.

It is sometimes assumed or suggested that, in trades in which there is much seasonal slackness, the earnings during the months of brisk trade will always be higher than in trades offering continuous employment; and high enough to enable the workers to be supported in the slack time out of the savings which they ought to make. Unfortunately this economic assumption is even less true as regards women's work than it is with regard to men's. We have been painfully impressed by the evidence afforded to us that many hundreds of thousands of adult able-bodied

women, giving their whole time to their work, can, even in times of full employment, earn only the barest maintenance. Even in workshops and factories there are many thousands of women, in London and other towns, whose full week's earnings do not exceed 6s. or 8s.; whilst 10s. a week is a good wage. Among the outworkers the condition of things is even worse. Though a small proportion of them may earn a fair wage, there are many who get only a starvation pittance. To give only one instance, a Relieving Officer of Birmingham informed our Investigators that:

"Button and hook and eye carding is done at home by some who apply for relief. It is the last resort of those who have come down and who delay coming for relief until they are in the deepest destitution. They get starvation wages. About 6d. a day is the most they can get. A woman would have to work very hard to earn 3s. 6d. per week if confined to her own labour."

Our Investigators expressly report that:

"The wages paid for home work in wholesale tailoring and corset-making of the cheaper class, which is the chief part of the Bristol trade, are so exceedingly low that no amount of industry on the part of the worker could provide an adequate support for a single woman."

The example of women disposes, we think, of the suggestion which has been quite seriously made to us, that *Unemployment might be prevented if only the workers would accept lower wages!* The docility of women, and their lack of organisation, has led them to take this course; but although women's wages are as low as any one could conceive possible, this does not prevent their having to stand idle, probably to an even greater extent than men, at each recurring slack season.

These facts must not, however, be allowed to obscure what seems to us the most important feature of the women's case. Only a small minority of the women in distress from lack of work are unencumbered independent wage-earners, both supporting themselves entirely from their own earnings and having no one but themselves to support. Among this class, though there may be

occasional Unemployment, and certainly recurrent Underemployment, there is—so long as they retain their health—very little distress. The vast majority of the cases of suffering and distress among women are those of mothers of families, who have either no husbands, or whose husbands are, for one reason or another, not at work, or are not earning enough to maintain them and the children. It is upon these unfortunate mothers, who are driven to engage in industrial work, without technical training, encumbered by home ties and responsibilities, and desperately anxious to make up the family livelihood, that the main burden of the suffering of Unemployment falls.

It would, however, be misleading to ascribe the distress of these mothers to the conditions—bad as they are—under which women work, or to the Unemployment from which they suffer. They are unwilling recruits in an industrial army which has no real need for them, and for which their circumstances unfit them. “Undoubtedly,” reports our Investigator, “in the great majority of cases the cause of [the women] taking in work is that the husband’s work is casual, or ill paid, or that he is in some trade, such as a carman’s, where he is liable to work short time.” The present Archbishop of York (lately Bishop of Stepney) gave us the following testimony :—

“I might mention that I made a long tour of visits to women engaged in what are called these sweated industries in a certain district of London ; I visited them all, and went as carefully as I could into their conditions. I remember in one day five or six cases where the unemployment of the man—and in most of these cases they were dock labourers—had forced the young wife, in spite of her having children, some of them children whom she ought to have been nursing, to undertake this sort of labour.”

We were given the following instance by the Women’s Industrial Council. One club leader writes :—

“I cannot give you any exact statistics of unemployed in our club, as owing to the large number of married women who only work when their husbands are ill, or under special circumstances, it is difficult to know when they actually want work and cannot get it, or when they think it best not to work, but to stay at home.”

women, giving their whole time to their work, can, even in times of full employment, earn only the barest maintenance. Even in workshops and factories there are many thousands of women, in London and other towns, whose full week's earnings do not exceed 6s. or 8s.; whilst 10s. a week is a good wage. Among the outworkers the condition of things is even worse. Though a small proportion of them may earn a fair wage, there are many who get only a starvation pittance. To give only one instance, a Relieving Officer of Birmingham informed our Investigators that:

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(unhappily, as we have seen, seldom adequate in amount) to the widowed mothers of young children. In our view, such mothers should not be aided or encouraged to engage in industrial work at all. As we have already said in Part I. of this Report, we have chosen so to organise our industry that it is to the man that is paid the income necessary for the support of the family, on the assumption that the work of the woman is to care for the home and the children. The result is that mothers of young children, if they seek industrial employment, do so under the double disadvantage that the woman's wage is fixed to maintain herself alone, and that even this can be earned only by giving up to work the time that is needed by the care of the children. When the bread-winner is withdrawn by death or desertion, or is, from illness or Unemployment, unable to earn the family maintenance, the bargain which the community virtually made with the woman on her marriage—that the maintenance of the home should come through the man—is broken. It seems to us clear that, if only for the sake of the interest which the community has in the children, there should be adequate provision made from public funds for the maintenance of the home, conditional on the mother's abstaining from industrial work, and devoting herself to the care of the children.

(E) *Class IV.—The Unemployable*

The Unemployable are the "Can't Works" and the "Won't Works." To this type there approximate a heterogeneous crowd of persons without any recognised means of subsistence, who either do not seek work, or who seek it in vain, being, owing to physical or mental shortcomings, in such a condition that they are not taken on by any employer, or, if taken on, are incapable of working, or are unwilling to work, or to retain any situation, for more than a few hours. In this crowd there are to be found men who have fallen from every social grade, every profession and every section of the wage-earners; along with others who have, so to speak, been born and bred in the

class, and have known no other experience. Among them we find many of feeble intellect and infirm will, but also some of moral refinement and exceptional talent. Others, again, are strong and competent, but of incurably parasitic or criminal disposition. To the observer of this flotsam and jetsam of our industrial life, it recalls the wreckage with which a foundered liner strews the ocean shore; material once of the most heterogeneous and sharply differentiated kinds, bright and clean and in active use, but now so battered and sodden as to appear, in bulk, almost homogeneous in its worthlessness — nevertheless yielding, if sorted out and properly treated, much that can still be made serviceable; sometimes matter that will become dangerous unless put in a proper place; and occasionally, lost to the world, a gem of real value.

These men are to be found, in greater or smaller numbers, wherever subsistence is to be had without work, or with only slight and intermittent work. Perhaps the largest section of them is that which habitually resorts to the Casual Wards of England and Wales, the "Casual Sick Houses" of Scotland, and the sheds and outhouses set aside for the "night lodgers" of the Irish Poor Law. Quite apart from the navy and the genuine seeker after work, who are found in these refuges in all but the times of brisk trade, there are estimated to be, always or the move, an army of between 20,000 and 30,000 professional tramps, to whom this mode of existence is habitual. Next to these must be reckoned the "Houseless Poor" of London, Manchester, Liverpool, the Black Country and other large centres of population; heterogeneous crowds of men who (though often confused with the Vagrants) seldom leave their own particular urban aggregations. These men oscillate between the Casual Wards and Free Shelters of their neighbourhoods, with occasional nights in the Common Lodging Houses; and between all these and the General Mixed Workhouse, where they form a great part of the troublesome class of "Ins-and-Outs." Latterly, as we have mentioned, they have been accumulating in increasing numbers in the Workhouses of London and Liverpool, and in the larger Poorhouses of Scotland. We

cannot estimate their aggregate number at much less than that of the Professional Tramps.

Among the Unemployable we must class, too, the extensive, though quite uncounted host of men who have settled down, with more or less infrequent odd jobs, to live in reality on the earnings of their wives, their children, or the women with whom they consort. What is socially most grave is not the existence of here and there parasitic individuals of this sort, but the degradation, owing to the combination of states of chronic Under-employment for the man with the habitual absorption in wage-earning occupation of mother and child, of whole batches of men, in particular industries or particular localities, into unemployable parasites.

Finally, we have, scattered all over the country, the prematurely invalidated of every kind and grade—the cripple, the man with defective eyesight or hearing, or with rupture or varicose veins, the able-bodied but aged man, the somewhat feeble-minded man, the sane epileptic whose fits are troublesome, the chronic inebriate; in short, all sorts of men who have infirmities not grave enough to allow or to compel their admission to the hospital or Workhouse, but whom an employer will not hire at wages. There is some reason to fear that this section of the Unemployable is a steadily increasing one, partly because of the adverse physical influences of the town slums, and partly because employers are coming more and more to exact a high standard of physical fitness.

All these different sections of the Unemployable exist at the edge of destitution, into which they are individually perpetually falling. We see them accordingly now and then getting relief, as we have described, on account of "Sudden or Urgent Necessity"; getting admitted for a day or two at laxly administered Labour Yards; or being discharged from the Relief Works of even the most long-suffering Distress Committee. But although the whole class of the Unemployable are perpetually passing in and out of the Poor Law, in and out of the Employment Relief of the Distress Committee, and in and out of the operations of Voluntary Charity, it may safely be said that the greater

part of their maintenance, *which we cannot put at less than a couple of millions sterling annually*, is, in one way or another, a burden on the lowest, paid and most irregularly employed sections of the wage-earning class.

This whole class exists, year in and year out, irrespective of the state of trade. Even in the busiest times—even when employers are really in need of men—the Unemployable are not employed. What is even graver is that we are, year by year, creating new Unemployables. The class is, indeed, no mere inheritance from an evil past. Its members are not, on the whole, long-lived. If we were suddenly relieved of the whole of the present incubus, without any change in the conditions, we should, within ten or twelve years, have just as many Unemployables on our hands as ever. It behoves us, therefore, to examine whence it is that they are being continually recruited.

(i.) *The Daily Manufacture of the Unemployable*

The Unemployables come, it is clear, from all sources. We may disregard, in this consideration, the rare figure of the ruined baronet or clergyman, university graduate or younger son, who, through drink, drugs, or gambling, sinks to the legion of the lost. We may disregard, too, the really professional criminals, who are—perhaps equally rarely—occasionally in distress from want of employment. Confining our attention to those Unemployables who represent the wastage from the manual-working, wage-earning class, we must distinguish those who, in the prime of life, drop in to the Unemployable class, from those who graduate to it from adolescence or gravitate to it from the premature appearance of old age.

We may, in the first place, here and there watch the descent of men from our Class I. Losing their permanent situations, they seek in vain for another. After trying expedient after expedient, some of them—perhaps because unanchored to a home, perhaps because of too restless a disposition to starve in one place—take “to the road,” and gradually adopt the life of the Professional Tramp. The process has been sketched by one who has spent many

years as a well-conducted but habitual Vagrant. "This man soon begins to see that the life of a man out of work is not so terrible after all. He gets enough to eat, and is free to go his way and he has no responsibilities. A fine healthy appetite compensates for the low quality of his food; for he will now relish plain bread and cheese as he never relished the beefsteak and onions of his former days. Day after day he passes before strange eyes, and, therefore, has no need to study appearances. He loses all fret, and settles himself to a wandering life. He cannot fail to see how happy are the real beggars he meets on the road and in lodging-houses—and he soon becomes indifferent to work."

More frequently, however, the descent is from Class II., the Men of Discontinuous Employment. To these men, the relatively high earnings whilst at work, the brutalising conditions of their labour, and the incessant recurrence of days, and perhaps weeks of idleness, afford an almost irresistible temptation to drink. The haphazard way of taking on men without references, and discharging at a moment's notice those who prove themselves unfit, both facilitates and encourages bouts of drunkenness. The man of irregular habits does not fail to get employment; what happens is that his employment is even more discontinuous than that of the men to be depended on. "It is at the beginning of a job, as a rule," we are told, that men are sacked for drunkenness or incompetence. "As a job goes on, you generally find the right men and keep them on." "A good many are discharged for losing time, inefficiency, and drunkenness," deposed another witness. "I am very sorry to say that the drunkenness business is a big item in the building trade. They are generally no good for a day or two after Bank Holiday, and very little good on each Monday. We have to keep our eyes a little closed on the Monday and to try to make them do more on the Tuesday. But it is not always through drunkenness that these Men of Discontinuous Employment drop into the Unemployable class. "You would be surprised," said a Manager of a building firm, "at the number of men that we have to discharge after two or three days. Some of

them do not want the work. . . . In Princes Street we had a job outside the Bank of England with excavators. We are continually discharging men. They will not do the work. They say it 'is too hard.' In reply to the question whether this was through inefficiency or laziness, the witness replied: "Laziness, I should say. A good many of the wives of the workmen are ironers and washers. They work at the wash-tub and earn a good wage." But the man may find himself continually turned off for mere incapacity, due to physical or mental shortcomings. "If," said a builder, "I employ a man who cannot do his work and he fails in an hour or two, because, perhaps, he has not been fed for weeks as he ought to have been, I have to dismiss him. I do not know the cause of the failure, and I do not ask the cause. I cannot go to him and say: 'My man, have you not had anything to eat for a week?' or something of that sort. I simply say: 'Come to the office and get your money.'" It is, in fact, difficult to discover, in any hasty survey, whether the inability to work arises from physical weakness or mental. "It is not the unwillingness to work," explained an experienced Manager of a philanthropic Labour Yard, "so much as the lack of power to persist in work. So many men seem to be able to work spasmodically; I find increasing difficulty on that point in getting men work, and they do not seem to be able at all to continue long in work." Such men, if not taken hold of in time, and cured, do not remain at this stage. They "quickly become degenerate in their habits, commence to drink and gamble, become loafers and spongers and criminals and paupers, living upon women, or upon the community as best they can."

The navvies, or "public works men," are, owing to their wandering life, and usual lack of a home, even more apt than the building operatives to drop into the Unemployable class. There has grown up a whole host of men who get only a day's work now and then, but who are habitually parasitic upon those who are employed. "It is an established fact," stated the Chairman of the Gloucestershire Vagrancy Committee, "that wherever the navvies are at work, there vagrants abound. I suppose the

ostensible idea of people being there is that they are attracted by the work. I believe they cadge upon the navy. The navy is a generous sort of fellow; he gets large pay, and they turn up when he is paid, and they get a 1s. and so forth from him. And on the road they have always got the plausible excuse that they are going down to Bristol seeking for work. I daresay you know similar cases have occurred elsewhere. For instance, while the Manchester Ship Canal was being constructed the number of tramps was so great there that, I believe, they had to hire warehouses to accommodate them." We have had described to us in evidence, by the same witness, on the one hand the constant increase in Scotland of the Professional Tramp and the perpetual recruitment of this class from the Men of Discontinuous Employment, and, on the other, the growth of this latter class, owing to the discontinuance of the engagements for definite terms that once characterised that country. The "daily pay" system, under which men are actually paid off at the end of each day, to be employed or not on the morrow as it may suit the convenience of the employer, or the caprice of the men, is said to be spreading in all directions. "We are at our wits' end to know how to deal with the tramps," said the Chief Constable of Kirkcaldy. The tramp nuisance "is very much on the increase in Scotland." Sixty per cent of them "are habitual 'ne'er-do-wells,' 25 per cent casual labourers, and 15 per cent other seekers for work."

But the most prolific of all the sources of the Unemployable is, without doubt, our Class III., the Under-employed. Here the causes of the worker's fall are to be sought far less in his personal weaknesses or shortcomings, though these all co-operate, than in the system of Under-employment to which he is condemned. "It is not," testifies an experienced Charity Organisation Society secretary, "that the casual man has a larger dose of original sin than his fellows; it is that he is exactly what any other class in the community would become . . . were they submitted for any length of time to the same system of employment. . . . That so large a proportion are weak in character

should not surprise, when the conditions of their employment are remembered. The men flit from odd job to odd job; their 'characters' are not 'taken up'; when no records are kept, strenuous efforts to maintain a high moral standard do not necessarily secure a man a preference, and complete failure to maintain the ordinary standard of his class creates no prejudice against him in the eyes of a fresh employer. *The world of work to the typical casual man is governed by chance, for the good are not more successful in securing work than the evil. No class in the community could withstand the demoralising influence of such a view of life and such a system.*"

(ii.) *The Wife and Mother as Bread-Winner*

To this class there comes with special force the temptation afforded by women's work. The household of the Casual Labourer, subject to chronic Under-employment, cannot possibly be maintained at all without making use of the wife's earning power. At Liverpool, for instance, "there is a good deal of supplementing the wages by the women of the family, owing to the fact that so many dock labourers are very irregularly employed. In many cases they depend to a very large extent upon the earnings of their wives and daughters, but those earnings are scanty and irregular." In London, we are told, "the man's unemployment is almost without exception the cause of the woman's work." "Eighty per cent of the married women with young families engaged in outwork in Poplar are the wives of casual unskilled labourers, most of them connected with the docks. . . . Where many men are casually employed, there many married women will be found casually employed also. This is notoriously the case in districts like Bermondsey and Poplar, where there are many men in comparatively low-skilled, low-paid and irregular occupations. When the husband's work is slack or when he is ill, or when he is drinking, the wife goes out to do a little charring or a little fruit-picking, or a little of the hundred and one things a woman may do in London." Here the tragedy of the descent begins. "In the case of

striving couples," we are told, "the extra shillings earned by the wife may help to sustain the standard of comfort in slack times, and to raise it a little in good times. *But the husband may be anything but thriving. He may be, and not infrequently is, in this class, a 'labourer' of one sort or another, whose demoralisation has been begun or continued by irregular employment and will now be completed by his wife's willingness to work.* The weaker husband, sometimes out of work, leans more and more on the stronger wife, sometimes in work, and by-and-by the husband is 'unemployed' and the wife doubly employed. . . . What is certain is that the irregularity of men's labour has a determining influence on the quality and amount of women's work and has far-reaching and injurious effects on family life." "When," as the result of the scantiness of the man's earnings, "the wife has 'set to' and is earning, there is too often a tendency to slacken in the pursuit of work. The great influence of women's earnings in encouraging slackness among their husbands has been remarked upon in many quarters." We watch this progressive creation of Unemployables, by Underemployed men becoming parasitic on their wives, among the cases that come before every Distress Committee. "Women's work and girls' work," report our other Investigators, "ruin the man's responsibility until it becomes almost *nil*. Many men before the Distress Committee did not know what the rent was or what was owing. One did not even know the names of his children. The reason is that the wives will sometimes do anything to keep the home together while the husbands loaf." This is seen in a bad form in West London, where "the laundry industry offers inducements to the women to become bread-winners of the family; the consequent loss to the home life is seen in the neglect from which the children suffer and in the wild independence of the older girls." It is seen in an aggravated form at Leicester, and, perhaps, at its worst at Dundee. In the boot and shoe factories in the former town, successive changes in the processes of manufacture have thrown the men out of employment "because their places are taken by women

and young persons, and this drives a number of married women to seek work in the factories, since they have to try and earn wages instead of their husbands." At Dundee, our Investigator found "plenty of female employment to keep loafers there who could not otherwise exist, and decent men there who had far better have gone elsewhere."

(iii.) *The Misuse of Boy Labour*

It is, however, a moot point whether a larger number of the Unemployable become so in the prime of life, as we have just described, by degradation from one of the three other classes, or graduate into Unemployableness from adolescence. There is no subject as to which we have received so much and such conclusive evidence as upon the extent to which thousands of boys, from lack of any sort of training for industrial occupations, grow up, almost inevitably, so as to become chronically Unemployed, or Under-employed, and presently to recruit the ranks of the Unemployable. In Glasgow nearly 20 per cent of the labourers in distress are under twenty-five; and one-half of them are under thirty-five. The registers of Distress Committees all over the country not only reveal the startling fact that something like 15 per cent of the men in distress are under twenty-five; and that nearly one-third of the whole are under thirty; but also that an alarmingly large proportion of these young men are already "chronic cases"—in fact, are Unemployable. "Most of us," formally reports the York Distress Committee, "are inclined to regard the existence of a large class of irregular and casual workmen and the presence of a number of Unemployables" as a necessary condition of "modern life. Our registers, however, show one avenue by which men come into these classes, and suggest how it might be closed. There are youths under twenty-one classified as 'irregular' and as 'been regular.' The 'irregular' ones must always infallibly spend their whole lives as irregular workers. Many of them are the sons of the poorest class of workmen, but a few are youths whose parents have done their best for them, but who have not

stuck to work. Those who have 'been regular' have generally started life as errand boys or in some position where a boy can earn good money, but which does not offer the means of learning any trade that will serve him through life." "A large proportion of working lads," reports the Birkenhead Distress Committee, "grow up without any definite industrial training. They take any employment that offers, the work itself is of a casual description, the growing lad moves from one job to another, and each change of situation is accompanied by a spell of idleness while work is being looked for. The lad reaches manhood without acquiring a trade or establishing himself in any situation of a permanent character, and he swells the ranks of the unskilled labourer. *His frequent spells of idleness affect his fitness for employment, and in periods of depression he quickly becomes unemployable.*" We were so impressed with the gravity of the problem thus revealed that we appointed a Special Investigator to deal with this subject alone. His Report, unfortunately, more than confirms the evidence supplied to us.

It has been demonstrated beyond dispute that one of the features of the manner in which we have chosen to let the nation's industry be organised is that "an increasing number of boys are employed in occupations which are either uneducative (in the sense of producing no increase of efficiency or of intelligence) or unpromising (in the sense of leading to no permanent occupation during adult life); secondly, that there is a constant tendency for certain industrial functions to be transferred from men to boys, especially when changes in the processes of manufacture or in the organisation of industry are taking place rapidly. The resulting difficulty is the double one of the over-employment of boys and the under-employment of men." This is, we are informed, partly because work has been subdivided and arranged, with the increasing aid of machinery, so as to be "of a character which can be done by boys, and therefore boys, being cheaper than adult labourers, are employed to do it. This particular class of boys—loom boys, doffers or shifters—is to be found in greater numbers in Dundee than in Glasgow. . . . The

demand for men's labour would have to be three times as great to provide work for all these lads . . . and a number whose parents have sent them to mill or factory as children are turned adrift at the age of seventeen or eighteen. A few of them become skilled workmen in other trades. . . . Some boys become labourers in other trades, others enter the Army . . . a number leave the town to seek work elsewhere, while others live from hand to mouth as casual labourers, or join the ranks of the permanently unemployed." Then there are the rivet-boys in shipyards and boiler shops, the "oil cans" in the nut and bolt departments, the "boy minders" of "automatic" machines, the "drawers off" of saw mills, and the "layers on" of printing works, and scores of other varieties of boys whose occupation presently comes to an end. The employment of boys in uneducational occupations from which they are dismissed at manhood is, however, specially extensive in the great commercial centres. In London, as there is reason to believe, no fewer than 40 per cent of boys leaving the elementary schools become errand boys, van boys, etc.; 14 per cent become shop boys, and 8 per cent office boys and junior clerks, whilst something like 18 per cent enter the building, metal, woodwork and clothing and printing trades. In towns like Glasgow, Liverpool, Bristol; and Newcastle the proportion of van boys, errand boys, etc., appears equally large. It seems that, instead of the years of youth leading naturally to a rise in competence and earning power in the same industry, if not even under the same employer, a large majority of boys have nowadays, between eighteen and twenty-five, "to seek new occupations for which they have little or no aptitude. They begin all over again, and may or may not be able to fit themselves for their new position." The main question is whether their previous years have benefited or deteriorated them; whether, in fact, they have been improved or *worn out and wasted* from the standpoint of their own industrial fitness as producers and wage earners."

"Unfortunately, as all the evidence shows, a large, and, as we fear, an increasing, proportion of the occupations to which boys are put are of the kind that does not fit them

for any skilled occupation, or indeed for a regular trade of any sort. In the words of a frank employer, they are not taught; they are made to work continuously at their own little temporary tasks. Of those who enter clerkships or the skilled trades a considerable proportion do well. Of those who enter low-skilled trades, a number fall into casual labour of one sort or another, and are at best among the Under-employed. Of the heavy contingent who become van boys and errand boys, the Army absorbs a large number, the mercantile marine gains a few; some get into low-skilled trades; but many—we fear a majority—have no other outlook than casual labouring and chronic Under-employment, from which it is inevitable that a certain proportion should become Unemployable. Nor is this using up of boys, without providing them with any industrial training, a new observation. In 1888, as in 1908, it was noticed that there were quite a large number of young men between twenty and thirty habitually “out of work,” and rapidly deteriorating, who have had no “training for work.” “We took the trouble, on the Relief Committee,” deposed one of our number in 1895, “to investigate some of the cases of these lads who asked for work, and in each case it appeared that they had left . . . one of those industries” in which there had grown up a system of doing the work mainly by boy labour, discharging them as soon as they asked men’s wages. “I have lived there about ten years, and, from my own knowledge, I have seen these boys growing up into real corner lads. You meet them at each corner at this time of the year; they get through life by carrying betting news, and in various other ways; in the winter they have got to get help either by going into the Workhouse or into stoneyards, if such are open. What I want to point out is that it is not these boys’ fault, but it is really the condition under which they come into the world and grow up, and the industrial life by which they are surrounded.”

We regard this perpetual recruitment of the Unemployable by tens of thousands of boys who, through neglect to provide them with suitable industrial training, may almost be said to graduate into Unemployment as a matter of

course, as perhaps the gravest of all the grave facts which this Commission has laid bare. We cannot believe that the nation can long persist in ignoring the fact that the Unemployed, and particularly the Under-employed and the Unemployable, are thus being daily created under our eyes out of bright young lives, capable of better things, for whose training we make no provision. It is unfortunately only too clear that the mass of Unemployment "is continually being recruited by a stream of young men from industries which rely upon unskilled boy labour, and turn it adrift at manhood without any general or special industrial qualification, and that it will never be diminished till this stream is arrested." In our Proposals for Reform we shall accordingly make specific recommendations on this point.

(iv.) *The Alleged Exclusion of the Elderly*

But besides the youths who, so to speak, graduate into the Unemployable class, there are the men who gravitate into it with advancing years or with infirmity. We have had it brought to our notice that men who are, or who appear to be, too old for the incessant "drive" and rapid processes of modern competitive industry are being dismissed at an earlier age than was formerly customary; and that such men, whether fifty or even forty years of age, find it increasingly difficult to obtain fresh situations. To quote one of the many statements made to us, it was said that "one very alarming feature of very recent years is the ever-increasing number of elderly men that seem to be cast aside as useless. This is, undoubtedly, a natural outcome of these limited liability company days, when every workman is simply a unit in a dividend-earning machine, and all personal relations have ceased to exist between employer and employed. The Compensation Act, too, has probably a great deal to do with it." It must, however, be remembered that the complaint of an increasing tendency to replace elderly men by the young is one that is always being made. In particular, it is to be traced as a constant refrain at every decade of the past century. In

1839, for instance, it was officially reported, as a partial explanation of the Unemployment among the Handloom Weavers, that "a great majority, including those who are past fifty years of age, or who from any cause do not possess the requisite skill, quickness of sight and strength, have great difficulty in getting employment to enable them to live." In 1848 we read, in terms that sound familiar, that "Workmen . . . are discharged as soon as grey hair appears, or a pair of spectacles is attempted to be used; many of the workmen straining their sight to the uttermost before they give in to be turned adrift through wearing them." "Old carpenters," it was said in 1850, "are generally despised by master builders; the failure of sight and wearing of spectacles is almost a death-blow to many a good old tradesman. And in many cases a master will not give an elderly man employment at any price; the consequence is that many have been compelled to go to the parish for relief or into the Workhouse. Employers instruct their foremen to deny a job to men above a certain age." And further, "It is one of the chief evils of the carpenters' trade that as soon as a man turns forty masters won't keep him on." What was said in 1839 and 1848-50 was being said in 1894—still prior to the Workmen's Compensation Act. "Throughout the entire field of industry the shortness of employment is most largely represented in the progressive Under-employment of the middle-aged. In many departments of labour, for example, among miners, sailors, mule-spinners, in metal and machine making, it is practically impossible for a man to have any security of work over the age of forty-five or fifty." We suspect, indeed, that the same thing has been alleged ever since the master-craftsman, himself producing and selling his own product, was replaced by the capitalist hirer of labour.

At the same time, we felt that, as the impression of an increase in this tendency to premature superannuation was so universal, and as it was very commonly alleged to have been aggravated by the Workmen's Compensation Act, the hypothesis demanded consideration. We therefore sought for some evidence that elderly men, or men who appeared

to be elderly, were actually being excluded from employment at an earlier age than had previously been customary. It appeared that, of all the many witnesses who repeated to us the current popular opinion, not one could produce any sort of statistical evidence in its support. If men are being dismissed at an earlier age, it would result in the average age of all the men in the employment of particular firms, or of all the men in employment at particular trades, steadily falling. In no case have we been able to find that this was the fact. On the contrary, Trade Union statistics indicate that the age at which members have to draw their superannuation allowance (on ceasing to be able to get employment) has, with the improved health of the nation, steadily risen. Thus, in the great Union of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the average age of all the members who, year by year, begin to draw their Superannuation Benefit, on finding themselves unable to continue in wage-earning employment, *steadily rises*. In 1885 it was sixty-one and a half years; in 1906 it was sixty-three and a half; in 1907 (possibly though increased strictness) it even rose to sixty-four and three-quarters. The fact is confirmed by the records of other Unions. Thus, in the Friendly Society of Ironfounders, the average age at superannuation in 1883-5 was sixty-one and three-quarter years; in 1906-7 it was sixty-two and three-quarters. A similar rise is to be seen in the records of the United Society of Boilermakers.

Nor have we been able to ascertain that the Workmen's Compensation Act has supplied a new motive for the replacement of elderly men by those who are young. The liability for compensation is so generally covered by insurance that the employers have no pecuniary interest in the matter beyond the amount they pay in premiums. It was suggested to us that the Insurance Companies were stipulating in their policies against the employment of elderly men, or penalising it by heavier premiums. We accordingly took steps to ascertain whether this was the case. We were definitely informed by the Chairman of the Associated Accident Insurance Companies transacting workmen's compensation business that "in the case of

general industries no restriction or stipulation is made in the contract of insurance with regard to . . . old men or men past middle life." It was admitted to us by employers that the Insurance Companies did not inquire the ages of the men thus insured, and that there was no attempt to differentiate against the elderly men. As a matter of fact, the Insurance Companies are under no temptation to do so, because—as was pointed out to us by workmen who knew the facts—contrary to current popular theories, it is not found that the elderly men are more liable to accidents than the young men. The evidence is, in fact, in the opposite direction. At the South Metropolitan Gasworks, for instance, where the late Sir George Livesey kept careful note of all the accidents between 1897 and 1905, it was found that, out of 2114 accidents in these eight years, no fewer than one-third had happened to the men between twenty and thirty years of age; and that, in proportion to the numbers employed, this was the most hazardous age. More than 5 per cent of the men of that age had accidents in the year, whilst the percentage of men between fifty and sixty who had accidents was only two-thirds as great. "It therefore seems quite clear," concluded Sir George Livesey, "in all the operations of gas manufacture, which are many and various, with much machinery, that advancing age does not make men more liable to accidents. They are, on the contrary, considerably less liable as they grow older. I may here say that the Company never discharges any man because he is growing old." The same testimony is given by Sir John Brunner with regard to chemical works. During the years 1893 to 1907, Brunner, Mond and Co., Limited, found that the men between eighteen and twenty-five had the largest percentage of accidents (8·5); those between twenty-five and thirty, the next largest (6·8); whilst the men between forty-one and forty-five and forty-five and fifty had less than half those percentages (2·8 and 3·7). "The figures," says Sir John Brunner, "are absolutely decisive, the scale of the inquiry both as regards the number of men and the number of years being abundantly sufficient. They show that the proportion of accidents

becomes less and less with remarkable regularity, as the men advance in years, and therefore that no employer is justified, in his own interest, in refusing to take elderly men into his service, or in dismissing them from his service in the belief that they are more liable to accidents than their younger brethren. . . . One 'feature' in this statement deserves emphasis. The reduction in comparative liability to accident is in exact relation to the increase of steadiness due to increase of age; it begins at the very beginning, not at the age at which men may be excused from dangerous work on account of lessened activity." And though the elderly man may not so easily recover from an accident as a young man, and may be longer in the doctors' hands, the remarkable statistical proof that has been adduced has confirmed the Accident Insurance Companies in their practice of ignoring age in their estimation of risks.

We then turned to the statistics relating to the persons known to be unemployed, expecting to find that the applicants to the Distress Committees were elderly men, men with premature grey hairs, men wearing spectacles, men bowed down with the infirmities that come with advancing years. To our surprise, we found that the very reverse was the case. Of all the qualified applicants to Distress Committees in England and Wales in 1907-8, only 2·7 per cent were over sixty; and only 14·2 per cent were between fifty and sixty; whilst no fewer than 22·8 per cent were under thirty. "Thus nearly 80 per cent of the applicants were between the ages of twenty and fifty years, the group of persons aged thirty to forty being actually the largest." This general result is confirmed in all the localities.

"The two most startling facts which have impressed me," writes the Chairman of the Bristol Distress Committee, "are, first, the very large proportion of general labourers to be found upon our books; and secondly, the large number of applicants who are in the prime of their working life, namely, between the ages of twenty and fifty. . . . Of a total of 2900 applications registered in the year ending March 1906, ninety-one only were under the age of

twenty, whilst 807 were between twenty and thirty, 787 between thirty and forty, 573 between forty and fifty, and 443 between fifty and sixty, whilst over sixty years of age we had only 200. We have thus 2166 out of a total of 2900 applications made by men in the prime of their working life. . . . The figures for the year ending 1907 work out very much in the same proportion." We imagined that the men who found themselves "too old at forty" might be in the Workhouses. But, though there is an alarming increase of able-bodied men in the Workhouses of London and various other centres, these too are found on examination to be mainly men in the prime of life; and certainly not men who could, with any credibility, ascribe their failure to get situations merely to the infirmities of age. "I have been curious," wrote a Local Government Board Inspector in 1903, to "ascertain what effect the Employers' Liability Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act have had upon elderly workmen. So far I have not found many men driven to the Workhouse as the result of these Acts. I have conversed with employers of labour on the subject, and they tell me that machinery is now so much used that an elderly man is as good as a younger man, and if capable, he has the advantage of experience in dealing with machinery."

Thus, whilst there is no evidence that the average age of the persons at work is declining, or that elderly men are found in increasing numbers among the Unemployed, there is also no reason why the Workmen's Compensation Act should have supplied a new motive to employers to differentiate against elderly men. Some explanation is required of the widespread impression to the contrary. We think it may be that—as it was put to us by an eminent statistician—"employers have got in rather a flurry when they found these new claims upon them, and have possibly discharged a few men, but very possibly by this time they are re-engaging them." What has generally happened is, however, that when employers have wanted to get rid of elderly men—as they have done at all times—they have used the Workmen's Compensation Act as an excuse. Equally often, when elderly men have been dis-

missed for some irregularity of conduct, or find the same difficulties as other men in regaining employment, they are prone to account for it by a cause so impersonal as the Workmen's Compensation Act. Every aged pauper man now gives the same explanation of his presence in the Workhouse. "There are," deposed the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, "always a proportion of loafers amongst the Unemployed who do not want work, and they are always willing to avail themselves of any excuse that offers to explain their being out of work."

(v.) *Raising the Standard of Efficiency*

Much the same scepticism may be felt with regard to the alleged increased exclusion from employment of the one-eyed man, the one-armed man, the slightly crippled or the ruptured man. At all times employers have preferred to take on a sound man rather than an unsound man. Here, however, we think that the evidence points to an increasing tendency among employers—whether this is due to the Workmen's Compensation Act or to a general tightening up of conditions under stress of competition—to scrutinise very carefully the men whom they take into their service, in order that, in return for the Standard Rates of Wages that they have to pay, they may get the most efficient workmen. Various large firms now make it a rule to have all workmen medically examined before engagement, and the practice is now spreading to the mercantile marine. Though this began before 1897, it is now ascribed to the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act of that year; and the giving of a preference to sound and healthy men may well have been promoted by such legislation. "In my opinion," said a North Country witness, "the Workmen's Compensation Act has made employers more particular as to the class of men employed. Defective vision or hearing has to some extent placed men on the labour market who would otherwise have been employed." "Last year," it was given in evidence, "Messrs. Vickers, Maxim tried the experiment

of examining all the new 'starts.' In twelve weeks I examined 286 men and rejected fifteen. The rejected included men with one eye, those with bad ruptures, bad ulcerated legs or scars indicating old ulcers, also men physically unfit. Owing to the opposition of the trade unions, this rule was suspended, but the firm may re-introduce it. Vickers, Maxim carry this rule out at their works at Erith, and have done so for six years." But perhaps the clearest case is that of the workman subject to epileptic fits. Insurance Companies are said to refuse to insure such men, and employers to employ them. We were informed that "as a matter of fact, prior to the 1897 Compensation Act, Messrs. Vickers had quite a large number of epileptics working, and they had contracted-out—under the old Employers' Liability Act of 1894 they could contract out of that Act—but when the 1897 Act came into force these men were all discharged."

The difficulty which the aged and the partially incapacitated find in obtaining employment, owing to the employers' preference for the more efficient workmen, is, however, viewed from the standpoint of the community, not a cause of Unemployment. So long as there are young and healthy workmen unemployed, it cannot be expected—it cannot even be desired—that the less efficient should fill the places to the exclusion of the more efficient. In so far as aged men, and partially incapacitated men, are found among those in distress from Unemployment—and this is to some slight extent the case—the problem is one of how best to maintain them in their old age and partial invalidity—not how to get them again into industrial employment for which other men, also compulsorily idle, are more fitted.

(vi.) *Existing Agencies dealing with the Unemployable*

The Unemployable, it will now be clear, constitute not so much a class as a heterogeneous multitude of individuals, requiring endless diversity of treatment. Yet the administrators of the present Poor Law persist in treating them merely as "the Able-bodied"; in one

Union apparently regarding them, all as "work shy" loafers or incorrigible rogues; in another treating them as if they were all excluded from employment on account of their age or infirmity, through no fault of their own. Thus, one Board of Guardians will offer to all alike the same General Mixed Workhouse or laxly administered Casual Ward. The next Board of Guardians will insist on "testing" all able-bodied applicants by a task of stone-pounding on insufficient diet and under penal conditions, in the so-called "Able-bodied Test Workhouse" or the cellular Casual Ward. Under these circumstances, it goes without saying that the Unemployable man of the "won't work" type accepts the hospitality of the laxly administered institution, and refuses that of the disciplinary one; preferring to the latter "the life of the road" or the hand-to-mouth existence of the loafer of the great cities, varied with brief sojourns in gaol. The worthy Unemployable, who is really unable to get taken on by any employer, finds the promiscuity of the General Mixed Workhouse and the penal discipline of the Able-bodied Test Workhouse equally deterrent, and resorts there only in the direst need, preferring to suffer slow starvation in his slum, or to struggle along on the scanty earnings of wife and child. Many of the intermediate types constitute the great army of "Ins-and-Outs" of the Workhouse of either kind. "Of preventive or curative treatment under the Poor Law there is, with regard to the Unemployable, at present practically no question.

Much the same may be said of the operations of the Distress Committees when "Employment Relief" is offered: the "won't works" sheer off, and the "can't works" linger on, to lower the standard of effort and increase the cost of the work. Neither section can be found places by the Labour Exchange or moved to another country. For the Unemployable, in short, the Unemployed Workmen Act is as futile as is the Poor Law.

The least unsuccessful of the agencies at present at work are, with regard to all sections of the Unemployable, the Working Colonies administered by certain religious or philanthropic organisations. For the slightly feeble-

minded and the sane epileptic there is provision at Lingfield, established in 1896 by the Christian Social Service Union. For the man of irregular conduct and doubtful past there is the training given at Hadleigh since 1890 by the Salvation Army. What is lacking, even to the most successful training Colony of this type, is, on the one hand, an assured outlet for those whom it has redeemed or trained, and, on the other, various grades of Colonies to which might be committed those who prove to be incorrigible and recalcitrant to training, or who are permanently unfitted for association with the outside world. The latter requirement points to establishments with powers of detention. The former demands some better organisation of the Labour Market, so that the cured or reclaimed Unemployable may not have to be thrown once more into the morass of chronic Under-employment.

(F) *Character and Unemployment*

It may be thought that we have, in the preceding survey of the types of the Unemployed, given insufficient attention to drunkenness and other forms of personal misconduct as responsible for the failure of men to retain their situations, or to get again into employment. We have deliberately subordinated the question of personal character, because, in our view, although of vital importance to the method of treatment to be adopted with regard to the individuals in distress, it does not seem to us to be of significance with regard to the existence or the amount of Unemployment. "The casual labourer engaged on Monday is dismissed on Tuesday, not because he refuses to work longer, but because the work for which he was engaged is at an end. The percentage of Unemployed carpenters rises from two in August to six in December, not because 4 per cent of the men have become unfit, or unwilling to work, but because winter is a bad time for building. When two handicraftsmen are replaced by one man at a machine, the change is not in them but in economic conditions." It is, no doubt true that the efficiency of labour is one of the factors of productivity;

and the greater the national product the larger the number of persons whom it will sustain. But, speaking broadly, employers take on the labour that they have occasion for, and no more; and the aggregate amount of their wages bill from week to week does not depend on the habits of the workmen. When trade is brisk, even the drunken men, the turbulent men, the negligent men, and the men of every kind of personal immorality, so long as they possess the requisite physical vigour, are pretty fully employed. The residuum of Unemployables, to be found, even at such times, in distress from want of employment, are not the men of bad character or conduct, but those who have, by long-continued Unemployment, become incapable of regular labour. When trade slackens, some of the men who have found work have to be discharged; presently others must share the same experience; and in the trough of the depression the staff has to be cut down to the lowest possible point. Doubtless, the least efficient wage-earners are the first to go, drinkers among the rest; although it is remarkable how great a degree of occasional drunkenness and personal misbehaviour an employer or a foreman puts up with from an expert or docile workman. Doubtless, too, the drunken and improvident workman, when thrown out of work, comes much more quickly into distress than his sober and saving brother. But the fluctuations in the volume of employment, and, therefore, the aggregate number of the Unemployed in the nation, are in no way related to the existence of drunkenness or misconduct among the workmen; and the fluctuations certainly would not be any the less (though the consequent distress would be) if all the men were teetotallers and as thrifty as could be desired.

Nor do we find that the Unemployed, as a whole, can be described as either drunken or vicious. Those in our Class I. have, in thousands of cases, lost their apparently permanent situations through absolutely no fault of their own; and, as we have already described, they are often impeded in the attempt to regain situations by the very characteristics which their long and continuous service has developed in them. Those belonging to our Class II. are,

by the very conditions of their calling, exposed at all times, and whatever their characters, to such extreme discontinuity of employment that not even the most virtuous operative can escape periods of enforced idleness; and there are unhappily far too many cases, in bad times, of the Unemployment being so prolonged—extending to many months, and even to a year at a time—that even the most thrifty households of carpenters and engineers exhaust their Trade Union benefits, and are brought to severe distress. And when we come to Class III., the Under-employed, there is, as we have seen, no ground whatever for assuming that the men's descent into this class was due to drink or misconduct. Once in it, indeed (and this is the worst of the tragedy), character is apt to go; and it is certainly no qualification for success. There is even reason to fear that, in the demoralising scramble for casual jobs, it is the lower, the more brutal, even the more dissolute, natures that prevail. Among the Unemployable, too, there are, as we have seen, not a few who are pathetic in their respectability. Thus, in their case also, it seems idle to ascribe their distress to personal misconduct.

At the same time, we do not wish to ignore the fact that, *taking the workmen as a whole and ignoring many individual cases to the contrary*, the men out of work at any one time are apt to include the less efficient, the less energetic, the less strong, the less young, the less regular, the less temperate, or the less docile of their class; 5 or 10 or 20 per cent had to go, and these particular men were chosen for discharge rather than other men for one or other of these reasons, some of which relate to personal conduct whilst others do not. Especially is this true of many of the Unemployed of Class II., whose Unemployment is specially prolonged; to many of those of Class III.; and to the bulk if not all of those of Class IV. Thus it is that it can be said "that, on the whole, the character of this class is comparatively weak, i.e. weak in intelligence, training, physique or *morale*, or all four. The men themselves say they are out of work through slackness of trade, and this is true in the sense that when a trade is extra-

ordinarily brisk almost any one can pick up some work. Employers' written and verbal characters show why one is chosen to be dismissed in time of slackness rather than another."

When all is said, however, the extent to which the Unemployed are men of good character or bad—important as it is to themselves, and to the method of treatment to be adopted with regard to them—appears to us, from the standpoint of prevention of the evil, wholly irrelevant. Whether the men are good or bad, drunken or sober, immoral or virtuous, it is a terrible misfortune to the community, as well as to themselves, that they should be Unemployed. In Unemployment their working power is lost to the nation; their wives and children are half-starved; the men themselves are steadily and almost inevitably deteriorated in body and mind. It is worth notice that not one of the many witnesses who appeared before us suggested that there was any advantage, social or individual, to be credited to Unemployment. Whether the man is good or bad, no one has pretended that a period of Unemployment tended to strengthen his will, to fortify his character, to brace his nerves, or to increase his thrift. The effect, by common consent, is the reverse. Indeed, if the Unemployed are all as faulty and as feeble as they are sometimes pictured—and in so far as they do include among them great numbers of the faulty and the feeble—the evil seems to us all the worse. The capable and perfectly virtuous man may possibly be able to go through a period of prolonged Unemployment without physical or mental deterioration. He tightens his belt; reduces his needs to the barest minimum; is fertile in contrivances for protecting his little household from the worst consequences, and in picking up odds and ends of income; and when the nation once more needs his services he is ready at call, little or none the worse for having been thrown aside for a time. Such perfection is, however, rare in any class of men, and it is, we fear, especially rare among the builders' labourers of our Class II., or among the whole of our Class III. (the Under-employed), whilst it is, of course, absent from Class IV. (the Unemployable)

Among all these merely average men, a prolonged spell of Unemployment is apt to mean the ruin, mental and physical, of the man and his family. "The effect of Unemployment upon the individual workman is to make him in course of time Unemployable."

"The men and their families," deposed Captain Hamilton, the Secretary of the Church Army, "physically deteriorate owing to lack of proper food and clothing. . . . Unemployment causes deterioration in the skilled worker, in habits and ability . . . men known as good workmen develop a distaste for steady work, after a long spell of Unemployment. Church Army officers . . . report that about half of those who apply for temporary work appear to have lost all ambition or hope of permanent employment, and have grown quite contented to depend upon casual work for short periods, and they attribute this to the gradual deterioration of the men from Unemployment. . . . However industrious and deserving the unskilled worker may be, a period of Unemployment, with the consequent lack of nourishing food and the worries attendant upon such a condition of life, soon reduces the physical efficiency of the man; this, with the increasing shabbiness of his clothing, makes it more and more difficult for him to obtain employment, and eventually he swells the ranks of the chronically inefficient and very casual worker, and, if married, his wife and children have to work to maintain him."

In short, it is just because the bulk of the Unemployed are, like other men, full of faults and shortcomings, that it is of such vital importance to the community to put an end to the incalculable waste, misery and deterioration that Unemployment at present causes.

(a) *The Need for a National Authority for all Sections of the Unemployed* ..

We find an overwhelming consensus of opinion among our witnesses that the task of dealing with the Distress from Want of Employment is one altogether beyond the capacity of the Local Authorities; and that, from the very nature of the case, the duty can be successfully undertaken only by a National Department. Thus, the Town Clerk of Bath, in an able summary of the results of a conference of representatives of more than fifty Distress Committees in December 1907, states as his conclusion

"that the permanent solution of the Unemployed problem must be found *nationally, and not locally*, and must be considered in conjunction with proposals for providing for those incapable of work, dealing with those who can but will not work, and promoting schemes for increasing the supply of labour for those who honestly desire to work, such as Farm Colonies, Afforestation, Reclamation of Forèshores, Extension of Inland Navigation, etc.; and even curtailment of the hours of labour."

To this conclusion of the need for a National Authority, the foregoing analysis of the different classes of the Unemployed, as in seems to us, inevitably points. In considering what is needed for each of these types, the disabilities of even the wisest Local Authority become apparent. For the men of Class I., who have newly fallen out of permanent situations, what is wanted is some effective agency for discovering whatever vacancies for them may exist anywhere in the kingdom, and the means of promptly migrating them and their families to take up these appointments. But, as we have seen, the Local Authorities have found it impossible to bring their little local Labour Exchanges into effective mutual co-operation. Each town has naturally wanted to keep all its vacancies for its own Unemployed. Moreover, it is an invidious thing for one Local Authority to transport its necessitous families into the district of another; and but little in the way of migration has proved practicable. We can hardly expect a Local Authority to provide, at its own expense, the training which may be required to enable its Unemployed to fit themselves to go off and engage in a new industry which may be expanding in some other part of the kingdom. Still more difficult is it for a County Borough to bring itself to acquire land outside its own area, in order to give such men of this class, for whom small holdings might be the most suitable provision, the chance of becoming self-supporting ratepayers in another county. The disadvantages of local action are even more obvious with regard to the Unemployed of Class II., the Men of Discontinuous Employment. These must necessarily wander over the borough boundary to building

operations in the suburbs; or from Northumberland to Cornwall in pursuit of great public works in progress. No organisation of information as to the jobs within the area of any one Local Authority can ever be of much use to this class. It is even a hardship to a Local Authority to find stranded within its area the men who have been attracted from all parts of the kingdom to some large undertaking, sometimes on the mere rumour that men were required, or men who have been left high and dry on the completion of the work. If, to tide over years of depression in the building trade, it is deemed desirable to set going great works of Afforestation or Land Reclamation, these are obviously beyond the scope of any Local Authority, and would be required for the men of all parts of the kingdom. Neither the organisation of the employment of "public works men," nor the provision to be made for such of them as are in distress, can be fairly regarded as a local problem. The men of our Class III., the Under-employed, are, it is true, usually found stagnating in a particular locality and may be said to "belong to it." But what is needed in such districts as West Ham and Poplar is not an active Local Authority relieving the distress due to this chronic over-supply of labour, but some outside power to draw off the surplus, convert it into good material, and place it where it is wanted, either in this country or somewhere else in the Empire. Municipal Relief Works, and everything else that a Local Authority can devise for this type of Unemployment, merely perpetuate the evil. But the class which is most intractable to treatment by a Local Authority is that of the Unemployable. This class is, we may hope, a relatively small one, but it is, as we have seen, extraordinarily heterogeneous. What is at once apparent is that any appropriate treatment of these men involves, not one device or one institution, but a considerable variety of devices and institutions, each dealing with its peculiar section. Yet to start Farm Colonies for the work-shy, Farm Colonies for the prematurely aged, Farm Colonies for the sane epileptics, Farm Colonies for the men of inferior physique or defective will—not to mention semi-penal establishments

for the incorrigible rogues—is beyond the capacity of any Local Authority, even that of the Metropolis. Moreover, the most troublesome section of the Unemployable are the Professional Vagrants. Here we have what is obviously a National question. It is useless to hope that this section will be diminished so long as Local Authorities are chiefly concerned—as experience shows that they always will be, so long as it is a matter of local administration—to get the Vagrants over the boundary into the next district, in order to avoid the trouble and cost of maintaining them.

It is, we think, also clear that the action to be taken must be such as to deal, not with this or that section only of the Unemployed, but with all of them. The different classes that we distinguish are not marked off from each other by sharp lines; and the individuals pass downwards from class to class with appalling ease. “The distinction between the Unemployed and the Unemployable,” says Sir John Gorst, “which is very real from an economic point of view, is unstable and transient in the individual. Nothing degenerates from lack of use faster than the capacity to work.” “No one,” adds General Booth, “will ever make even a visible dint in the morass of squalor who does not deal with the improvident, the lazy, the vicious, and the criminal.” For the Government to provide means of rescue or provision for this or that section, and not for the other sections, is practically certain to lead to the provision being swamped—as has been the experience of the Unemployed Workmen Act—by those for whom it was not intended, but for whom no alternative provision is made. To deal nationally with one section whilst leaving the rest to be provided for by the Local Authorities is open to the same objection. No small part of the trouble in the past has arisen from the fact that rival Authorities have been simultaneously dealing with parts of the problem in different ways. It has been left to the Poor Law Authorities to provide for the man at the crisis of destitution; whilst the Distress Committees and the Municipalities have been trying to prevent the destitution of the Unemployed by giving him work at the ratepayers’ expense. The Local Police

Authority is often scolding the Poor Law Authority for compelling, by its penal conditions, the houseless poor or Vagrants to "sleep out." The Prison Commissioners complain that the Local Police Authority crowds the prisons with the "sleepers-out," whom the regulations of the Board of Guardians have thus made into criminals. In return the Board of Guardians complains that the prisons are made so comfortable that men prefer them to the Casual Ward, and even to the Labour Yard. Meanwhile, Voluntary Agencies try to make up for any shortcomings in public provision by Free Shelters and Soup Kitchens. And when the Local Education Authority and the Local Health Authority find themselves feeding the children of Unemployed men, or medically treating their dependents, there is no Authority to whom they can turn in order to get enforced on the man the responsibility of earning sufficient to keep his family. Amid all this conflicting and overlapping activity, the mass of suffering and the continuous degradation due to want of employment remain, in spite of all the expenditure, practically undiminished.

(H) *Conclusions*

We have, therefore, to report :—

1. That distress from want of employment, though periodically aggravated by depression of trade, is a constant feature of industry and commerce as at present administered; and that the mass of men, women, and children suffering from the privation due to this Unemployment in the United Kingdom amounts, at the best of times, to hundreds of thousands, whilst in years of trade depression they must exceed a million in number.

2. That this misery has no redeeming feature. It does not, like the temporary hardships of work or adventure, produce in those capable of responding to the stimulus, greater strength, energy, endurance, fortitude, or initiative. On the contrary, the enforced idleness and prolonged privation characteristic of Unemployment have, on both the strong man and the weak, on the man of

character and conduct and on the dissolute, a gravely deteriorating effect on body and mind, on muscle and will. The magnitude of the loss thus caused to the nation, first in the millions of days of enforced idleness of productive labourers, and secondly in the degradation and deterioration of character and physique—whether or not it is increasing—can scarcely be exaggerated.

3. That men in distress from want of employment approximate to one or other of four distinct types, requiring, as we have described, distinct treatment; namely, the Men from Permanent Situations, the Men of Discontinuous Employment, the Under-employed, and the Unemployable.

4. That what is needed for the Men from Permanent Situations is some prompt and gratuitous machinery for discovering what openings exist, anywhere in the United Kingdom, for their particular kind of service; or for ascertaining with certainty that no such openings exist; with suitable provision, where individual saving does not suffice, for the maintenance of themselves and their households whilst awaiting re-employment. Both the machinery and the provision are at present afforded, in some industries, by Trade Union "Vacant Books" and Trade Union Insurance. This, however, does not meet the need of the large numbers of men in occupations for which no Trade Union exists, or in which no machinery for reporting vacancies and no insurance against Unemployment have been organised. Nor does it meet the cases, unhappily always occurring in one industry or another, of men whose occupation is being taken from them by the adoption of new processes or new machinery, without any effective opportunity being afforded to them of training themselves to new means of livelihood.

5. That for the Men of Discontinuous Employment the same prompt and gratuitous machinery for discovering what openings exist, anywhere in the United Kingdom, is required, not only for individuals exceptionally Unemployed, but for the entire class, at all times; in order to prevent the constant "leakage" of time between job and job, and to obviate the demoralising aimless search

for work, whether over any one great urban aggregation, or by means of wandering from town to town. The same machinery becomes imperative in times of bad trade, in order to ascertain with certainty that no opportunity of employment exists. Without some such machinery, experience shows that Insurance against Unemployment breaks down, owing to the excessive amount of "time lost" between jobs, and the impossibility of securing that every claimant has done his best to get work.

6. That of all the forms of Unemployment, that which we have termed Under-employment, extending, as it does, to many hundreds of thousands of workers, and to their whole lives, is by far the worst in its evil effects; and that it is this system of chronic Under-employment which is above all other causes responsible for the perpetual manufacture of paupers that is going on, and which makes the task of the Distress Committees in dealing with the Unemployed of other types—such as the Men from Permanent Situations, or the Men of Discontinuous Employment—hopelessly impracticable.

7. That we have been unable to escape from the conclusion that, owing to various causes, there has accumulated, in all the ports, and indeed in all the large towns of the United Kingdom, an actual surplus of workmen, there being more than are required to do the work in these towns, even in times of brisk trade: this surplus showing itself in the existence of the Stagnant Pools of Labour that we have described, and in the chronic Under-employment of tens of thousands of men at all seasons, and in all years.

8. That we have been struck by the fact that this chronic Under-employment of men is coincident with the employment in factories and workshops, or on work taken out to be done at home, of a large number of mothers of young children who are thereby deprived of maternal care; with an ever-growing demand for boy-labour of an uneducational kind; and actually with a positive increase in the number of "half-timers" (children in factories below the age exempting them from attendance at school). Thus we have, in increasing numbers (though whether or

not in increasing proportion is not clear), 'men degenerating through enforced Unemployment or chronic Underemployment into parasitic Unemployables, and the burden of industrial work cast on pregnant women, nursing mothers, and immature youths.

9. That the task of dealing with Unemployment is altogether beyond the capacity of Authorities having jurisdiction over particular areas; and can be undertaken successfully only by a Department of the National Government.

10. That the experience of the Poor Law in dealing with destitute able-bodied men and their dependents; of the Distress Committees in providing for labourers out of employment; of the Police in attempting to suppress Vagrancy and "sleeping-out"; of the Prison Commissioners in having to accommodate in gaol large numbers of men undergoing short sentences for offences of this nature; of the Education and Public Health Authorities in feeding and medically treating the necessitous dependents of able-bodied men; and of the Voluntary Agencies dealing with the "houseless poor" of great cities,—all alike prove that every attempt to deal only with this or that section of the Able-bodied and Unemployed class is liable to be rendered nugatory by the neglect to deal simultaneously with the other sections of men in distress, or claiming to be in distress, from want of employment. That accordingly, in our judgment, no successful dealing with the problem is possible unless provision is simultaneously made in ways suited to their several needs and deserts for all the various sections of the Unemployed by one and the same Authority.

CHAPTER V

PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

WE have now to state the Proposals for Reform to which our consideration of the problem presented by the Distress from Unemployment and the Destitution of the Able-bodied has led us. We put forward these proposals, far-reaching in character as some of them are, with a deep sense of responsibility. We have done our best to investigate the actual facts and conditions of the problem, and to weigh carefully all the considerations that have to be taken into account in grappling with it. We have tested our proposals, so far as this is possible, by individually and privately consulting, with regard to each of them, the men of practical experience, both official and commercial, whom we thought best qualified to judge as to what could, and what could not, be successfully put into operation. We must, however, point out that, with regard to this Part of our Report, the conditions do not permit the presentation of the same sort of detailed and finished Scheme of Reform as that with which we were able to conclude Part I. In respect of all the classes of the Non-Able-bodied, what we had to recommend lay rather in the domain of administrative policy and organisation, than in the *technique* of the several services. When we were considering the appropriate treatment of Children, the Sick or the Insane, we could take for granted the existence of an elaborate body of knowledge, worked out by specialised Local Authorities, as to how to run a school, a main drainage system, an isolation hospital, or an asylum. All that we had to do

was to show cause and devise means for transferring from an antiquated system of Destitution Authorities such of the members of these classes as had fallen into the hands of those authorities; and for the assumption of the necessary responsibilities by the several specialised Local Authorities already dealing with similar services. But in the prevention and treatment of Able-bodied Destitution and Distress from Unemployment, we are, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in a position somewhat similar to that in which the prevention and treatment of sickness stood at the opening of the nineteenth century. We have still to work out by actual practice the appropriate *technique*.

For this reason, among others, we wish to make it clear that the adoption of the Scheme of Reform, with which we have concluded Part I. of this Report, is in no way dependent upon an adoption of our present Proposals for Reform with regard to Distress from Want of Employment. We are, for instance, compelled to propose that the Local Authorities, to whom would be entrusted the whole administration of the Children, the Sick, the Mentally Defective, and the Aged, should have nothing to do with the provision for the Unemployed. In our view the task of dealing with the Able-bodied person in destitution or distress transcends, by its very nature, the capacity of even the best Local Authorities, and must, if success is to be attained, be undertaken in its entirety by the National Government, on new principles, and with the help of new administrative machinery. If, however, organisation on a national basis is deemed inadvisable, or premature, the addition, to our Scheme of Reform, of a Committee for the Unemployed, dealing with all Able-bodied persons in distress, would even give to that Scheme administrative symmetry and logical completeness. In that case, there would need only to be a distinct committee of the County or County Borough Council, dealing with all sections of the Able-bodied and with the Able-bodied exclusively. In this committee (which might be called the Committee for the Unemployed) the existing Distress Committee would be merged. It would have

at its disposal all or any of the devices of the Poor Law and the Unemployed Workmen Act; the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, the Outdoor Labour Test, the Casual Ward, the Municipal Relief Works and the Farm Colony, the Labour Exchange and Emigration. To have one Local Authority, and one only, dealing with Able-bodied men, whether Paupers, Vagrants, or Unemployed, would be, in itself, a vast improvement on the present conflict and confusion caused by the existence of two rival Local Authorities simultaneously relieving the same class of men. To have this Statutory Committee for the Unemployed, entirely distinct from the Statutory Committees for Children, for the Sick, for the Mentally Defective, and for the Aged—administering its own separate institutions, by its own staff of officials, and working out its own specialised *technique*,—would be an enormous advance on any general Destitution Authority, with its inevitable “mixed” policy, its “mixed” officials, and its “mixed” institutions, always crumbling back into the General Mixed Workhouse.

The dominant exigencies that must govern all proposals for reform in this field are, as we have described in the preceding chapter:—

(a) The existence, practically at all times, of honest and respectable workmen in distress from Unemployment; either because they have fallen out of permanent situations, or because the interval between jobs is unusually prolonged.

(b) The chronic state of Under-employment in which hundreds of thousands of workers, especially at the seaports, and in all the great towns, habitually exist, owing to the casual and intermittent nature of their engagements.

(c) The vague and aimless wandering in search of work, either within a large town, or from town to town, which leads to demoralisation and vagrancy.

(d) The lack of any systematic provision for the training in new means of livelihood, whether in industry or in land settlement, of men displaced by new processes, machinery or other industrial changes.

(e) The intermixture among the Unemployed, the Under-employed, and the Vagrants, of all sorts of "unemployables"—the debilitated and the demoralised, loafers and wastrels, beggars and criminals, who, whilst in one way or another maintaining an degenerate existence at the public expense, are always ready to appropriate and pervert any provision made for the more deserving sections.

Our proposals for Reform are designed to meet all these exigencies.

(A) *The National Labour Exchange*

The first requisite is the organisation throughout the whole of the United Kingdom of a complete system of public Labour Exchanges on a national basis. This National Labour Exchange, though in itself no adequate remedy, is the foundation of all our proposals. It is, in our view, an indispensable condition of any real reform.

We are impressed by the need, throughout nearly the whole field of industrial life, of some better means than at present exist by which those seeking employment can discover, *quickly, gratuitously, and with certainty*, exactly what places are vacant, and where these are situated; by which employers seeking assistance can have before them those persons who happen to be disengaged; and (what in our view is no less important) by which it may be conclusively ascertained that no opportunities of employment exist for particular kinds of labour at particular times. Some such organisation of information has clearly become necessary in practically all trades—if not to employers, at any rate to all sections of the Unemployed. It was easy, in the village, or even in the small town, with scant variety of occupation, for employers and wage-earners to be aware of all vacancies and of all available men. But in the huge wildernesses of London and other great cities, with the bewildering multiplication of occupations and specialisation of employments, a deliberate organisation of means of communication between employers and employed is as indispensable, if time is not

to be wasted in endless runnings to and fro, as the central sorting room of the Post Office or the Telephone Exchange.

(i.) *The Experience of Germany*

But the utility of the Labour Exchange has been abundantly demonstrated. In nearly all the large towns of Germany such an institution has now been established; and we have available, in some cases, the testimony of ten, and even of twenty years' experience. Over 700 Labour Exchanges of one kind or another are now regularly reporting to the Imperial Statistical Office at Berlin. They are filling about *two millions of situations annually*. These Labour Exchanges are of various sorts, but the most interesting to us are the Public General Exchanges, established by the municipal authorities in practically every town of 50,000 inhabitants. Perhaps the most remarkable example is that of Stuttgart, a town standing in population between Leicester and Newcastle-on-Tyne, where the Public Labour Exchange, which has been in operation since 1895, finds situations for *more than a thousand male and female workers every week in the year*. Here the Labour Exchange has the hearty support of both employers and workmen. All the large Trade Unions (with one exception) have voluntarily given up their own registers of unemployed members, preferring such members to utilise the Public Exchange. Many Trade Unions (including those of the wood-workers, metal-workers, bookbinders, saddlers, millers and brewers' operatives) compel their unemployed members to report themselves daily at the Public Exchange as a condition of receiving their out-of-work pay. Turning to another German city, we may note that the Labour Exchange at Munich, which has a salaried staff of eighteen clerks, etc., and fills *over 200 situations a day*, "is situated on an island over which passes the principal bridge connecting the two halves of the city. The accommodation consists in essence of a number of waiting-rooms opening off a central corridor, and each communicating directly with the office of the superintendent

in charge of the particular section. There are, for instance, three sections for men—unskilled, skilled workers in iron and wood, and all other skilled workers, each with its own waiting-room and superintendent; one for apprentices, and two for women (industrial workers and domestic servants). Applicants for employment come to the appropriate waiting-room and fill up there a short form, indicating name, address, age, whether married, single, or widowed, occupation and work desired, last employer, and one or two other details. Applications for work-people are received in the corresponding office by personal call on the part of the employer or his representative, by post, or most commonly by telephone. As they are received they are announced by the superintendent in the waiting-room, and the number required picked out from the men presenting themselves. From the forms already filled in by the men the superintendent enters the essential points in a current register, and sends the men off to the employer with a card of identification. The employer receiving the card is requested to note on it which, if any, of the men he has engaged, and to return it through the post—it is already stamped and addressed—to the Labour Office. Where the employer has called in person or sent an agent, this is, of course, not necessary; the hiring is concluded there and then at an interview in the superintendent's office. In the unskilled section men may stay in the waiting-room all day. In the skilled sections there are fixed hours—generally one in the morning and one in the afternoon for each trade. It should be added that any situation not at once filled is notified on a black-board in the waiting-room, so that any man coming in later and desiring to apply for one of them may at once present himself to the superintendent. Twice a week, moreover, lists of situations unfilled are drawn up and exhibited in public places. They are also inserted in the Press, and sent round to all the neighbouring Labour Exchanges.

“The Labour Office appears to concern itself very little with inquiries as to the character of applicants for employment. They are not even always asked to produce their infirmity insurance cards. Efforts are, of course, made to

send the sort of man asked for by the employer, but, in the unskilled section at least, the attitude is taken that it is ultimately the employer's business to satisfy himself as to the capacity of the men he engages. The Labour Office is essentially a means of communication. It does, no doubt, in the long run, give the employer a better workman than he would get by chance from the streets; the superintendent has almost always a certain choice in the waiting-room, and can pick the abler or the better known man. This, however, is only an indirect service. The direct utility of the Labour Office—as it presents itself unmistakably to any one spending a morning in any one of its rooms—is to prevent economic waste by reducing to a minimum the period during which employers are seeking for men or men for employers. *In the unskilled section, with men always in the waiting-room and applications from employers arriving in an almost continuous stream, business has to be conducted at lightning speed."*

(ii.) *The Experience of London*

Nor are we without experience of the working of a Public Labour Exchange in this country. As we have mentioned, the Central (Unemployed) Body began, in 1906, the organisation of a system of Labour Exchanges for London as a whole. In spite of many difficulties, which are gradually being overcome, this score of Metropolitan Labour Exchanges, at last covering all London, are now, each year, regularly receiving from employers information as to about thirty to forty thousand permanent situations that are vacant; and are actually filling from among the work-people who gratuitously register themselves as desiring places, no fewer than 25,000 situations a year. What is interesting is to find that, although there are many applicants for employment for whom situations are not found, *there are also many vacancies notified by employers, for workers of particular experience, which cannot be filled.* Still more numerous are the situations notified to any one Exchange which that Exchange, for all its long list of waiting applicants, is unable to fill. A steadily

increasing use is accordingly being made of the Exchanges in other parts of London, and the central office. An employer sends to the local Exchange for a workman of such and such a kind. The Superintendent of the local Exchange finds that he has none on his "livé register." He telephones to the central office, and the inquiry is sent to every one of the London Exchanges. It is significant of the proved value of the organisation that no fewer than *a hundred situations per week are filled from applicants in other districts*. The working of the Metropolitan Exchanges shows, in fact, that, whatever the state of trade, the wider the area covered by the Labour Exchange organisation, the larger is the proportion of situations filled, the fewer the employers whose wants remain unsatisfied, and the smaller the remnants of applicants for employment for whom places cannot be found. But the Metropolitan Exchanges are working under great difficulties. They find their operations confined by the boundary of the Administrative County of London, whilst industry has spread out into West Ham and Tottenham, Willesden and Ealing, Wimbledon and Croydon. With such industrial "overflows" from London as the rapidly-growing factories of Luton and Reading, Chelmsford and Erith, and all the intervening country, the London Exchanges are practically unable to get into easy and regular communication. From places farther afield they are wholly cut off. It is, in fact, a grave misfortune that, as we have seen, the "network of Labour Bureaux" covering the whole country, which the Unemployed Workmen Act ordered to be established, has not yet come into existence.

(iii.) *The Experience of the Seamen's Labour Exchange*

What is in some respects an even more interesting experiment in Labour Exchanges is that, confined to a single industry, but extending to the whole of the United Kingdom, which the Board of Trade has conducted for nearly half a century under the Merchant Shipping Acts. Under certain sections of these Acts, which were designed to suppress the evils of "crimping," every engagement of

a seaman, a fireman, a cook, a cabin-boy, or other person in the mercantile marine is required to be entered into at the public office maintained by the Government for that purpose. There are nearly 150 Mercantile Marine Offices in as many different seaports, at which places alone seamen can be hired. Thirty-seven of these are nothing but Labour Exchanges, whilst the others are adjuncts of the local Customs offices. There is a waiting-room where Jack can sit and smoke; a register where he can inscribe his temporary address; even a small staff of "runners"—in the Civil Service Estimates euphemistically entered as messengers—whose business it is to know Jack's haunts, so as to find him promptly when he is required. "We undertake practically to find a crew for every ship," said one enthusiastic Superintendent. The master mariner comes to the waiting-room; questions the men; picks out those whom he thinks will best suit his ship; and enters into contract with them then and there, in the presence of the Superintendent, who sees that the conditions of the contract include such as the law makes obligatory, but has otherwise no authority in the matter. These offices are situated where most convenient to the shipping trade, and they are open for the most suitable hours—even, as at Grimsby, where fishing boats need to catch the tide, in the middle of the night. If no suitable man can be found in the port—say, for a boatswain's place—the Superintendent may, at the master's expense, telegraph to the Mercantile Marine Office at the next port and have, as a favour, a suitable man advanced his railway fare and sent along. These 150 Mercantile Marine Offices fill *more than half a million situations a year*; 492,133 in 1906, in the 37 principal offices alone. No seaman is ever at a loss where to apply for whatever situations in his calling may be vacant. It is an interesting reflection upon this experiment that in all our investigations into the tens of thousands of Unemployed whom the Distress Committees have had on their hands, *we have seldom found a seaman*.—practically none from the Royal Navy, and very few from the Mercantile Marine.

(iv.) *The Functions of the National Labour Exchange*

We propose that the institution of the Labour Exchange, using the experience of Germany and the Metropolis, should be adapted to the needs of each of our four classes of the Unemployed.

(a) *The Labour Exchange and the Men from Permanent Situations*

The Men from Permanent Situations—our Class I.—would discover at once what situations were vacant, and in what towns; would learn promptly if there was nowhere any opening for them; would ascertain whether the particular services for which they had been trained were being superseded by industrial changes; and, if so, to what occupations they could best turn. Where Trade Unions existed, they could, if desired, use the public offices of the Labour Exchange for keeping their "Vacant Books," and even for their branch meetings. For the Men from Permanent Situations, indeed, the National Labour Exchange would, as we shall presently describe, become the axis of a system of subsidised Trade Insurance against Unemployment. But for the whole of this class, and for their employers, and therefore for the majority of the persons engaged in the industry of the nation, the use of the Labour Exchange might, we suggest, be left entirely optional.

(b) *The Labour Exchange and the Men of Discontinuous Employment*

For the second class, the Men of Discontinuous Employment, the Labour Exchange has to fulfil a more important function. The need for bringing together employer and workman, in our Class I. only an occasional requirement, is, in our Class II., a perpetually recurring need. By its rapid and continuous collection of information, the Labour Exchange would be able to obviate the present futile

drifting about in search of work and the incessant "leakages" of time between jobs, by which so many men are ruined. The operatives in the building trades, and the navvies, might ascertain, even before the actual expiration of one job, what other jobs were beginning. In each large urban aggregation, whether the 300 square miles of the Metropolitan business area, or the 50 to 100 square miles of the other great centres, it would be possible, by a free use of the telegraph and telephone, to make known, hour by hour, exactly what openings there were for each class of labour in each part of the town. Every morning it could be published all over the Kingdom in which towns, if any, there was an unsatisfied demand for labour, and for what kind of labour. No less important would it be to make known in which trade, and in which towns, there was an ascertained surplus of workers for whom no places could be found. The navvies, for instance, instead of wandering hither and thither on mere rumours of public works, could be directed straight to the places in which they were needed, in exactly the numbers required. We think that it will probably be found desirable—and, indeed, for the common convenience of employers and employed—that, as in the case of the seamen, it should be made compulsory, at any rate in certain scheduled trades, for all engagements to be made, not necessarily on the premises of the Labour Exchange, but at least through its organisation, and registered in its books.

(c) *The Labour Exchange and the Seasonal Trades*

A special type of Discontinuous Employment is presented by those trades which have fairly regular fluctuations in the volume of work, according to the season of the year. Here the workers find themselves busy during certain months, and habitually short of work during others. As workers in these "seasonal" trades supply a considerable proportion of the Unemployed, we were glad to be furnished by the Board of Trade with statistical returns of their fluctuations during the decade 1897-1906.

"These Returns show, in the first place, a good many spring and summer trades. Of these, building . . . is the most obvious. During spring, employment improves rapidly, and receives a fresh impetus in July; from the end of August it falls off quite steadily till the end of the year. Furnishing follows the same general course with a busy time more concentrated in the spring, and coach-building with one in June and July. In coopering, the season comes somewhat later, and is carried on with only slightly diminished briskness till the end of the year. Brush-making and hat-making have each a second season in the autumn. In clothing, the worst time is in October and November; every subsequent month shows improvement till the late spring. Leather-workers and mill-sawyers, though also busiest in spring and summer, and slacking off to the winter, have not such well-marked seasons. . . .

"The Returns show, in the second place, certain trades whose general tendency is directly the contrary of that outlined above. They may be regarded as winter trades. Steel-smelting, while somewhat irregular, has undoubtedly its slackest time in June and July.

"In the third place, certain trades have . . . very characteristic fluctuations, which are apparently more dependent on social habits than on climatic conditions. Printers are always busiest at the end of November, grow slack as soon as Christmas is past, grow busy in February and March, and slack again from April to June, always recover a little in July, and then fall into a dead season during the summer holidays. Paper-makers, as might be expected, follow the same course, though not so regularly. Tobacco-workers also are busiest in November, and stand idle in July and August. Bookbinders . . . agree with printers in being busiest in November, but have a slack season more or less throughout the late spring and summer."

"It will be seen that there is in coal-mining a definite seasonal fluctuation. December is busiest; employment falls off in January, to recover in February and March, after which it falls off in April; and though recovering in May, becomes slack again throughout June, July, and August. With September there is in all cases a recovery. . . . Iron-mining shows definite though limited seasonal fluctuations. The last four months of the year, and May, are busy times; January, April, and June to August are times of comparative slackness. For iron and steel works . . . the three months June to August, and January, are marked out as periods of comparative slackness. The tin-plate industry . . . has apparently a similar fluctuation."

It thus appears that there is no such marked pre-dominance of briskness in the spring and slackness in the

winter as is commonly supposed. On the contrary, many industries are at their busiest in the winter months. There is, indeed, no month in the year in which some trades are not usually at their busiest; and no month in the year in which some trades are not usually at their slackest. Thus, January is the busiest of all months at the docks of London and most other ports, and one of the busiest for coal miners; February in paper making; March in steel-smelting and textile manufacture; April in brush-making and the furnishing trades; May in engineering and ship-building, coach-making, hat-making, and leather-work; May, June and July in all the ramifications of the clothing trades, as well as among mill-sawyers; July and August for the railway service and all occupations in holiday resorts, as well as for carpenters and coopers; August and September for all forms of agricultural harvesting; September for plumbers and iron-miners; October in iron and steel works; November for printing and book-binding, for the tobacco trade, the tin-plate manufacture, and the metal trades generally; whilst in December coal-mining, the very extensive theatrical industry, the Post Office service, and the gas and electricity works are all at their greatest volume of employment. On the other hand, January shows iron-mining and the furnishing trades to be at their slackest; in February (contrary to popular belief) the plumbers have the most unemployment of any time of the year; in March and April the coopers; in May and June the London dock labourers and the coal-miners; in July the iron and steel and tin-plate workers; in August the paper-makers, printers, book-binders, and tobacco workers; in September the textile operatives and various metal workers; in October all the clothing trades are at their slackest; in November ship-building is, on the average, at its minimum; whilst December is the worst month for carpenters and engineers, mill-sawyers and coach-builders, leather-workers and brush-makers.

The inference is irresistible that, if we had accurate statistics of the daily volume of employment in all industries, it might well be that we should find the aggregate for all trades, in all parts of the country, to be approxi-

mately uniform throughout the year. And this, when we come to think of it, is suggested by the character of the consumers' demand. The income of any highly differentiated industrial community accrues to it from day to day, and becomes available for personal expenditure from week to week, in approximately equal instalments throughout the year. Though each family varies its consumption of different services and commodities at different seasons—now buying winter clothes, now summer clothes, now using more coal, now taking holidays—the total amount of the weekly outlay of the typical household does not exhibit any great variation throughout the year. It is clear, at least, that the variation from season to season, when we take the aggregate for all industries and for the nation as a whole, must be very much smaller than the seasonal slackness which, at present, in trade after trade, annually brings tens of thousands of families into the desolation of prolonged Under-employment.

The Discontinuous Employment due to seasonal slackness is, in fact, so far as the labourers and all unspecialized workers are concerned, strictly analogous to the Under-employment of the dock and wharf-labourer. Just as each employer of this kind of labour tends to keep his own reserve, or "Stagnant Pool," which he drains only on his busiest day, so each seasonal trade attracts to itself, not merely enough workers to do its daily average of business throughout the year, but enough for its busiest season, with the result that each trade in turn, as its own particular slack season comes round, has a large proportion of its workers under-employed.

This, however, overstates the case. In some cases the seasonal industries avoid variations of staff by working more continuously in the busy season and "short time" in the slack months. This, in various forms, is the practice of the coal-miners, the textile operatives, the iron and steel and tin-plate workers, and many kinds of factory operatives. It is also to a great extent the practice in agriculture and many minor industries. Where wage-earners enjoy practical continuity of employment under the same employer (but only in those cases), this variation of the

length and assiduity of the working time is no doubt the most convenient way of meeting the variation of the demand, especially for the men of any specialized skill.

In other seasonal trades there is a certain amount of unorganised "dove-tailing." The hop-gardens get their harvesting done by 20,000 workers drawn each September and October from other occupations. About 25,000 Irish labourers still come from Connaught to help to reap the potatoes, and do other harvesting work from Perthshire to the Fen Country. Some of the Thames riverside workers supply the increased staff still required in the winter (though to a lesser extent than before so much machinery was employed) in the London gas-works. And everywhere in all sorts of industries a certain amount of individual and almost casual "dove-tailing" goes on, by which workers, in their own slack season, contrive to earn a little irregular income at other occupations.

With a National Labour Exchange in effective operation this "dove-tailing" of one seasonal trade into another could be enormously increased, at any rate among the labourers who follow each trade, the women workers, the less specialized of the skilled workers, and the "handy men" and nondescripts whom every industry employs. Thus, to take dock labour, and three other industries only, employing a large proportion of general labourers and only slightly specialized men, we have been furnished by the Board of Trade with figures showing the average number of men employed daily in each month of the year, during 1906, at the London docks and wharves, and in the gas-works, at the water-works, and on the tramways of the whole country. Each of these industries, by itself, shows a variation between its busiest month and its slackest month of between 9 and 22 per cent, the fluctuations affecting some 10,000 men, and that repeatedly. Adding them together, the variation between the total employed at the extremes of high pressure and slackness is only 7 per cent; the most extreme fluctuation affecting only some 5000 men, *and the busiest months being those of November, December and January*, when the building trades and brick-making are at their slackest. It is probable that

the inclusion of the unskilled men in these two further industries would reduce the aggregate seasonal variation to a vanishing point. This it would be the business of the National Labour Exchange to accomplish. In this way, a much greater continuity of employment throughout the year could be secured for these persons who were employed at all; at the cost (which accompanies every stage in the Suppression of Under-employment) of squeezing out altogether, once and for all, some of those not really required for the work to be done, who now pick up, owing to the absence of organisation, half a subsistence in chronic Under-employment. For these, of course, as a condition of the reform, suitable provision would have to be made.

(d) The Labour Exchange and the Under-employed

The Men from Permanent Situations, the Men of Discontinuous Employment, and especially those among them whose industries are subject to considerable seasonal fluctuations, are, as we have shown, in the preceding chapter, constantly dropping into our Third Class—the men who are, year in and year out, chronically Under-employed. It is with regard to this class that the Labour Exchange reaches its highest utility. It presents us with what, in our opinion, is the indispensable instrument for dealing with Under-employment. We must postulate, to begin with, the great desirability, from the standpoint of the community, of putting an end to all this “casual” or irregularly intermittent wage-labour, if we could do so, because of its social effects. No housekeeping can stand a demoralising uncertainty as to whether the week’s income will be five shillings or five and twenty. We cannot, however, hope to abolish the irregularity of demand which lies at the root of Under-employment. At every port the loading and unloading of ships necessarily depends on their arrival and departure. Whether we have to do with the private enterprise of unloading ships or harvesting crops, or with the public service of the Post Office or the tramways, we cannot expect ever to prevent incessant fluctuations from day to day in the number of men required.

But although we cannot prevent, and may not even be able appreciably to lessen, the fluctuations of employment, by each separate firm, and in each separate industry, it is not necessary that these fluctuations should work themselves out, in the world of labour, into *an army of hundreds of thousands of men who are chronically Under-employed*. What a National Labour Exchange could remedy would be the habit of each employer of keeping around him his own reserve of labour. By substituting one common reservoir, at any rate for the unspecialized labourers, we could drain the Stagnant Pools of Labour which this habit produces and perpetuates.

For this purpose, an element of compulsion is indispensable. The evils of the present way of engaging Casual Labour are so manifest, and its direct results in Pauperism and demoralisation have been so clearly ascertained, that our Investigators were led to propose, with regard to dock labour at any rate, that it should be prohibited by law.

"There seems to be no right," they report, "to claim that such a state of things should continue. We believe that the voluntary establishment of a weekly wage for the great majority of the labourers employed, if not for all of them, is possible, and that if this is done, an employment of such a nature, which requires its extra hands in the winter, might prove a boon to the unskilled workers in other trades, whose busy time is in the summer. Lastly, if no system of weekly engagements is voluntarily established (and we believe it would be an advantage to employers as well as employed), we would be prepared to go further, and suggest that such a minimum period of engagement be made a legal obligation."

To some such legal prohibition of a method of hiring labour that is demonstrably quite as injurious to the community as was the Truck System, we must inevitably come, if no other remedy can be found. Stopping short however, of the legal prohibition of casual hirings, we may reasonably ask those employers who continue to adopt this mode of engaging labour to submit to some slight regulations calculated to reduce the social evil that they undoubtedly cause. We propose that it should be made legally compulsory on employers (being persons carrying

on industrial or commercial operations for profit), in all those cases in which it is not convenient to them to guarantee a minimum period of employment, which might be put at a month (subject, of course, to the power of dismissal of any particular individual for misconduct, and even of arbitrary replacement of one man by another if desired), to hire such labour as they want, whether for a job, a day, or a week, exactly as is done without complaint in the mercantile marine, *exclusively through the National Labour Exchange*.

We recommend that the "National Labour Exchange" should make a point of accommodating itself to the needs of every kind of fluctuating industry; that it should be assisted in each locality by an advisory committee of employers and employed; having offices opened exactly where most convenient to employers (for instance, actually inside the dock gates, or at the principal wharves, or at any other places where sudden demands for labour occur); keeping whatever office hours were required (ready, for instance, to supply labourers at five in the morning); and, of course, telephonically interconnected, and organised up to the maximum efficiency. As there would be no other opportunity of getting casual employment at all (with the possible exception of the odd jobs offered by private persons, not engaged in business; and even these we may hope to diminish), it would not be necessary to make it legally compulsory on the labourers to enrol themselves at the Labour Exchange, except under the circumstances that we have described. Nor would it be necessary legally to prohibit the existence of other agencies for filling situations. As employers would not be able to use them for casual labour, such agencies, dealing, as they do, almost entirely with certain specialised kinds of employment, such as domestic servants, hotel employes and secondary school teachers, would scarcely compete with the National Labour Exchange, and would have, perforce, to confine themselves, as they practically do now, to filling situations of at least a month's duration.

This plan, it will be seen, reduces to a minimum the proposed restriction on the employer, or the interference

with his business. It would cause him absolutely no increase of expense. In so far as he can offer regular employment of a month's duration, he is not affected at all. Even for casual labour, he remains as free as before to hire it by the job or by the day only, for as short a period as he chooses. He will have at his disposal all the men in the whole town who are not already engaged. He is able, in fact, to draw from a common reservoir instead of from his own Stagnant Pool. He may have his own choice of men (assuming that they are momentarily disengaged). He may ask for this man or that; he may keep his own list of "preference men"; he may send for ten or a hundred men in order of his preference, or send merely for so many men without naming them. He may even bargain privately with the man of his choice, and virtually secure him beforehand; provided that he lets the formal hiring take place through the Labour Exchange. All that he is forbidden to do is, at any time or under any circumstances, to take on casual labour otherwise than through the Labour Exchange.

The result to the labourer living by casual employment will be that he will find effectively open to him, not merely the particular demand for labour of this or that wharf, or this or that foreman, on which he has been in the habit of waiting, but the whole aggregate demand of the town. One employer needs men to-day only, but another needs men to-morrow; one trade is busy this month, another next month. The policy of the National Labour Exchange would be, subject to any preferences expressed by employers, so to distribute the available men, and so to "dovetail" the engagements offered to each of them, as to secure to each man who was employed at all, five or six days' work in every week. In so far as this was achieved, we should have done for Casual Labour what has been done compulsorily for every person employed in the mercantile marine, and voluntarily for skilled nurses in most large towns by the various nurses' institutes, etc., and for the members of the Corps of Commissionaires in London, namely, combined freedom to the employer to hire only for a job, with practical continuity of work to

the person employed. To quote the words of an able student of this problem, "decasualisation will reconstruct the whole conditions of life in the lowest ranks of industry, sifting out for remedial treatment a certain number of 'unemployables' and forcing up the level of all the rest. It will replace the casual class—always on the verge of distress, always without reserves for an emergency—by a class for whom the words, foresight, organisation and thrift may represent not a mockery but a reality."

The question may present itself, why, if the chronic Under-employment of the labourers can be thus prevented, has it not already been prevented? The answer is to be found, as has been demonstrated at Liverpool and elsewhere, partly in the difficulty that each individual employer experiences in attempting to reorganise the habits of a trade; partly in the difficulty of even a whole trade by itself affecting a change; but very largely also in the very real opposition which the labourers themselves have offered to the introduction of regular employment. There is, indeed, a difficulty which has to be faced. If, by means of an effective Labour Exchange at Liverpool, the whole work of the docks could be done by 8000 men continuously employed, with a thousand or two more retained for exceptional times of pressure, instead of (as at present) being spread over 15,000 men who are chronically Under-employed, the social gain to Liverpool would be great, but there would be 5000 men squeezed out altogether. Every dock labourer in Liverpool fears that he would be among the excluded. It is, in fact, not possible to abolish Under-employment, except at the cost of depriving some of the Under-employed men even of the employment that they have. Hence the task cannot be undertaken except by a public Authority, and by one prepared at the same time to provide, adequately and honourably, for the men displaced by the improvement. We deal with this in our sections on the Absorption of the Surplus and the Provision for the Unemployed.

(c) *The Labour Exchange and the Suppression of Vagrancy*

The National Labour Exchange presents what, in our opinion, is the only effectual way of suppressing Vagrancy. As is recited in the Report of the recent Departmental Committee, every variety of treatment of the Vagrant, from the most penal severity to the most generous laxity, has been tried in vain. So long as the only method of finding work is for the workman simply to go and seek it, there is no possibility of preventing the Unemployed from wandering from town to town. So long as the workman in search of a job has to wander, it is impossible to distinguish between him and the Professional Vagrant. So long as the "public works men" are left to stream helplessly from one job to another on mere rumour, without any kind of adjustment between the numbers attracted and the numbers required, it is impracticable to stop the swarm of "cadgers," who prey on the generosity of the navy and contaminate the locality in which the contractor is at work. "The knowledge of men of this class which I have gained," sums up Captain Eardley-Wilmot, "in my experience as governor of both convict and local prisons, and more recently as an Inspector, has convinced me that no alteration in treatment, within the limits that would be allowed in this country, could affect their number. Causes for increase must be looked for in the social and economic conditions of the period under discussion. I may add that this is the opinion of every thoughtful and experienced prison official with whom I have discussed the question."

With the National Labour Exchange organised in all towns it will become possible for the unemployed workman in any part of the kingdom to inform himself, with precision, whether or not he is required in any other place. There will cease to be any excuse for wandering in search of work. We propose that, if it appears, on telegraphic or telephonic communication, that there is reason to believe that a workman can obtain employment in another town, and if he wishes to go there for that purpose, but has not

money, a special non-transferable railway-ticket should be supplied to him, upon an obligation to report himself the same day at the Labour Exchange of the town to which he is sent, and to repay the cost of the ticket by weekly instalments from his wages. Arrangements could be made, whenever thought desirable, for the man to be met on arrival and conducted to the Labour Exchange. If this were done, it would be possible to prohibit all wandering without means of subsistence and to abolish the Casual Ward. But we do not propose that the man found destitute "on the road" should be sent to prison. His duty would be to report himself to the nearest branch of the National Labour Exchange, where he would find, without fail, either opportunity of working or else the suitable provision that we shall describe. If this were done it would be possible to make all the minor offences of Vagrancy—such as begging, "sleeping out," hawking or peddling without a licence, wandering without means of subsistence, wandering with children in such a way as to subject them to hardship or deprive them of the means of education, etc.—occasions for *instant and invariable commitment* by the Justices, not for short sentences to the ordinary prison, which experience shows to be useless, but to one or other of the reformatory Detention Colonies which must form an integral part of the system of provision, and which will be described in our section on the Provision for the Unemployed.

(f) *The Labour Exchange as a Method of enforcing
Personal Responsibility*

A large part of what is erroneously classed with Vagrancy is, as we have seen, merely a failure of a section of the residents of the great cities to get work sufficient even to provide themselves with a night's lodging. At present there is, indeed, no practical method of enforcing upon able-bodied men the obligation of working. Every large town has its class of "houseless poor" who, with the aid of Free Shelters and philanthropic distributions of food, and occasional resorts to the Casual Ward and to "sleeping

out," manage to exist with the very minimum of work. This deteriorating and contaminating class cannot at present be suppressed, because (in the absence of any proof that they could get work for the asking) public opinion does not permit of any real punishment of their offence, and persists, in fact, in relieving their physical wants. An analogous difficulty stands at present in the way of any real enforcement on negligent or drunken parents of their parental obligations. The Local Education Authorities, who find children hungry at school, and the Local Health Authorities, who are driven to supply milk to starving infants, find it practically impossible to prosecute even the most criminally negligent parents, because there is no proof that they could get work if they chose. We have seen, moreover, in our chapter on Charge and Recovery, how difficult it is for the Poor Law Authorities, even where men could earn substantial wages, to bring sufficient proof to convince County Court Judges and Magistrates that they are in a position to pay what is due from them. In all these directions the existence of the National Labour Exchange, where any man may be ensured either the opportunity of working, or else the provision that we shall presently describe, will enable personal responsibility to be far more effectually enforced than is now possible. Whilst no man who is fulfilling all his obligations need be compelled to report himself to the Labour Exchange, even if he is Unemployed, such attendance and report would, of course, be an imperative requirement and condition of any form of Public Assistance. If a child is found hungry at school, or without boots, the first question will be why is the parent not at the Labour Exchange, where either work or adequate provision is available for him. When this is understood, it will be found possible to take much more drastic action against those who, out of idleness, selfishness or negligence, or through drunkenness, refuse to provide themselves with lodging, or deprive their wives and children of the necessary food and clothing, or fail to make any payments that are due from them.

(3) *The Absorption of the Surplus*

Some enthusiastic advocates of the Labour Exchange think so highly of the improvement that it would introduce in the organisation of the nation's industry that they believe it would be possible to give continuous employment to those at present unemployed, and at the same time, through the constant growth of the nation's industry, obtain other places for the section of the Under-employed who would thereby be squeezed out. We do not take this view. We think that the "Decasualisation of the Casual Labourer" and the Suppression of Under-employment cannot be undertaken, and ought not to be undertaken, without simultaneously providing, in some way or other, for the men who would be thrown out. We have shown that there exists in the United Kingdom to-day no inconsiderable surplus of labour—not, indeed, of workmen who could not, with an improved organisation of industry, be productively employed; but of workmen who are, as a matter of fact, now chronically Under-employed, and of whose potential working time a large part is, to their own mental and physical hurt, and to our great loss, at present wholly wasted. By the working of a National Labour Exchange such as we have proposed, and by the deliberate draining of the Stagnant Pools of Labour into a common reservoir, we contemplate that a rapidly increasing number of these Under-employed men will find themselves employed with practical continuity, whilst there will be a corresponding section left without any employment at all. For the surplus of labour power which already exists in the partial idleness of huge reserves of Under-employed men, and which will then for the first time stand revealed and identified in the complete idleness of a smaller number of wholly displaced individuals, we want to ensure that the National Labour Exchange shall be able to find appropriate employment at wages. It so happens that there are three social reforms of great importance which would promote this object, and which, accordingly, we recommend for adoption concurrently with any attempt to drain the morass of Under-employment.

(i.) *The Halving of Boy and Girl Labour.*

We have seen that one of the most prolific sources of Casual Labour, with its evil of chronic Under-employment, is the employment of boys in occupations which afford them no industrial training; and which, whilst providing them with relatively high wages during youth, leave them stranded when they reach manhood. The extensive and, as we fear, the growing use of boy-labour in this uneducational way produces a fourfold social detriment:—

“There is, first of all, the evil, through the multiplication of van-boys, errand boys, messenger boys, etc., of recruiting a chronically excessive army of unskilled, casually employed, merely brute labour. There is, further, the illegitimate use, by employers, of successive relays of boys, not as persons to whom a skilled trade has to be taught, but, by ignoring that responsibility, as cheap substitutes for adult workers, who are thereby deprived of employment. There is, as the other aspect of this, the failure to provide for the healthy physical development of the town boy, whose long hours of monotonous and uneducational work leave him a “weedy,” narrow-chested, stunted weakling, whom even the recruiting sergeant rejects, and who succumbs prematurely to disease. Finally, there is the creation of the ‘hooligan’—the undisciplined youth, precocious in evil, earning at seventeen or eighteen more wages than suffice to keep him, independent of home control, and yet unsteadied by a man’s responsibilities.”

It may be said that it is the duty of the parents to take care that their sons are placed out in situations where they will receive proper industrial training. Unfortunately, as is only too clear, the great majority of parents, even when they give sufficient thought to the matter, find it impossible to give their sons a proper start in life.

“What stares in the face the exceptionally careful parent of the poorer class who tries to start his son well is, in London, the difficulty of discovering any situation in which his boy can become a skilled worker of any kind, or even enter the service of an employer who can offer him advancement. We have, on the one hand, a great development of employment for boys of a thoroughly bad type, yielding high wages and no training. We have, on the other hand, a positive shrinkage—almost a disappearance—of places for boys in which they are trained to become competent men.

London employers not only refuse to teach apprentices, even for premiums—they often refuse to have boys on those parts of their establishments in which anything can be learnt.”

Exactly the same difficulty is found, in fact, by the Poor Law Authorities in placing out the pauper children for whom they are responsible. We are not satisfied that, as regards the boys in particular, these do not, to a considerable extent, eventually recruit the ranks of the Under-employed; so that the Boards of Guardians in England, Wales and Ireland, and the Parish Councils in Scotland, may be, to no small degree, creating their own future difficulties. Out of the 300,000 boys and girls maintained out of the Poor Rate, for whose upbringing the Poor Law Authorities are definitely responsible, something like 20,000 have annually to be started in employment. With regard to some 15,000 of these, whom the Boards of Guardians and Parish Councils have elected to maintain on Outdoor Relief, we cannot discover that any care is taken that they should be either apprenticed or brought up to a trade at which they can get regular employment. There is, in fact, only too much reason to fear that practically the whole of these 15,000 “Children of the State” pass into ill-paid occupations, in which they can eventually earn no regular livelihood, and that (as regards the boys at any rate) they almost wholly recruit one or other sections of the Under-employed. With regard to the remaining 5,000 who have been in Poor Law Schools, or Cottage or Scattered Homes, or “boarded-out,” more care is taken by the Poor Law Authorities; and practically all the girls go into domestic service. For the boys, too, in many places, as much as possible is done, but the dearth of openings for indoor apprentices in skilled trades compels a very large proportion to enter the Army as bandsmen; and it is hoped that on the expiration of their military service, they find remunerative occupation as musicians. We think that there should be more alternatives open.

There is, unhappily, no little evidence to show that the difficulty that parents and Poor Law Authorities alike experience in placing out boys in occupations affording them regular work and a constant livelihood is not con-

fined to the Metropolis. There is the same difficulty in Glasgow and Liverpool, Manchester and Hull. The evil is not that boys are employed, or that they suffer from Unemployment; but that they are employed all day at non-educational occupations. In Dundee a large majority of the boys have to find employment in places in which they learn no trade by which they can subsequently earn a livelihood. In the cotton-spinning mills of Lancashire three-fourths of the piecers necessarily fail to become spinners, and have eventually to change their occupations. Even the Postmaster-General, the largest individual employer of labour, employs far more boys in his service than he can use as men; and has accordingly annually to dismiss, about sixteen, several thousand boys to whom he has taught no trade by which they can earn their bread.

Such a state of things, in which an enormous number of boys obtain no useful industrial training before attaining manhood, calls obviously for remedy. We cannot restore the old apprenticeship system, even if that had anything like its commonly-supposed advantages. At no time did it provide trade teaching for more than a small minority of the population, and then by a method which Adam Smith denounced as extravagantly costly to the community. There is now no method by which, over the greater part of the industrial field, the great mass of boys can be technically educated—whether we mean by this the teaching of manual crafts or merely a wider education of hand, eye and brain into all-round industrial capacity—other than that of Trade Schools. We see no other way of turning the boy into a trained and fully-developed man than that of providing the necessary training between fifteen and eighteen *by the community itself*. The parent demonstrably cannot do it. The employer will not and (under the present industrial conditions) is really often not in a position to do so. We have had before us various proposals for increasing the facilities for evening instruction, and for rendering attendance at evening continuation classes compulsory. It is, however, clear that, useful as evening continuation classes may be to particular individuals, it is impossible for boys who are exhausted by a

whole day's physical toil to obtain either physical training or the necessary technical education. The "theory that boys can become errand boys," reports our Investigator, "for a year or two and then enter skilled trades cannot be maintained. Very few boys can pick up skill after a year or two of merely errand-boy work. . . . The great mass of them fall into the low-skilled trades or wholly casual labour." We have, therefore, come to the conclusion that, if we want to turn into trained and competent workmen the 300,000 boys who now annually in the United Kingdom start wage-earning at something or another, there is only one practicable plan. *We must shorten the legally permissible hours of employment for boys, and we must require them to spend the hours so set free in physical and technological training.*

We think that there would be many advantages in such an amendment of the Factory Acts and the Education Acts as would make it illegal for any employer to employ any boy at all, in any occupation whatsoever, below the age of fifteen; or any youth under eighteen for more than thirty hours per week; coupled with an obligation on the employer, as a condition of being permitted to make use of the immature in industry, to see that the youth between fifteen and eighteen had his name on the roll of some suitable public institute giving physical training and technical education; and an obligation on the boy to attend such an institute for not less than thirty hours per week. This attendance might either be for five hours every day, in the morning or afternoon respectively, or for ten hours on alternate days, according to the convenience of employers in different industries; or, in order to suit the needs of agriculture, it might be concentrated, wholly or chiefly, in particular months of the year. It should at the same time be made obligatory on the Local Education Authorities to submit schemes for providing within a limited period the necessary institutions for the youths of their districts in whatever way was most suited to the local needs. Such a law would have various advantages:—

"(1) The employer would find it less advantageous to employ boys, even if he took them in double shifts, and paid them no more

per hour than he did before, and he would consequently not be so anxious so to alter his processes as to substitute them for adult men. But (as the supply of boy labour would be halved) there would be a positive scarcity of boys, and their rate of wages per hour would probably rise, so that the employer would tend to employ, instead of boys, actually more adult men than at present.

(2) The youth, who now has even too much pocket-money, and gets, therefore, too soon independent of home, and too easily led into evil courses, would find his earnings reduced, perhaps not by half, but probably by one-third, and his leisure absorbed under discipline.

(3) At the Polytechnic it would be possible, in thirty hours a week, from fourteen to eighteen (or twenty-one) to put the youth through a course of physical training, under medical supervision, under which he would learn to swim, to row, to box, to ride, etc.; and it could be ensured that the adverse hygienic conditions of town life would be rectified.

(4) There would be possible in the course of four or seven years' half-time at the trade school an education of hand, eye and brain; a practical ability to use competently the ordinary tools; a knowledge of drawing, practical geometry, and workshop arithmetic; and even a groundwork of training in particular handicrafts; such as few even of duly indentured apprentices get. We need not try, or even desire, to convert every boy into a skilled engineer, cabinet-maker, or compositor. But we could make every boy, whatever his occupation, into a man of trained hand, eye and brain; disciplined, and good-mannered; of sound muscle and fully-developed lungs; with a general knowledge of common tools and simple machines; able to read a plan and make a drawing to scale; ready to undertake any kind of unspecialised work, and competent, even if he does unskilled labour, to do it 'with his head.'

With regard to the need for extending, to boys between fourteen and eighteen, something like the supervision and control exercised over them whilst at school, there is abundant evidence. At present, as in the past, it is mainly the "juvenile adult," between sixteen and twenty-one, who recruits our prison population. It is the absence of any system of control and organisation for the employment of the young which is universally declared to be one of the principal causes of wrong-doing. "When a boy leaves school the hands of organisation and compulsion are lifted from his shoulders. If he is the son of very poor parents, his father has no influence, nor, indeed, a spare hour, to find work for him; he must find it for

himself; generally he does find a job, and if it does not land him into a dead alley at eighteen he is fortunate. Or he drifts, and the tidy scholar soon becomes a ragged and defiant corner loafer. Over 80 per cent of our charges admit that they were not at work when they got into trouble."

We have hitherto referred only to boys. But the problem of the girl is, from an educational standpoint, analogous. They all need the training of body and brain, hand and eye; they all need the instruction in the use of the household implements and tools; they all need the technical education that is necessary to produce competent housewives and mothers. Even if we regard the industrial work of girls as, for the most part, a "blind alley" destined to end at marriage, the need for their technical training in household duties becomes all the more imperative. They do not, and cannot, get such training before they leave the elementary school. The compulsory release of girls up to eighteen from industrial wage-earning for half their time, and their compulsory attendance at suitable educational courses in which physical training and the various branches of domestic economy and household management (including how to rear a baby) would find place, offers, in our opinion, the best way of ensuring their adequate preparation for their duties as wives and mothers.

We should recommend these reforms even if they rested solely on their educational advantages. It is upon the proper physical and technical training of its youth that the nation has eventually to depend. But they present also the additional attraction that they would, we believe, arrest the tendency so to arrange industrial operations as to replace the labour of adult men and women by that of boys and girls. We do not think, in the face of the large numbers of the Unemployed and the Under-employed which our inquiry has revealed, that any objection can be made on the plea that the labour of immature boys and girls is indispensable to the nation's industry. One result of halving the effective labour force of boys and girls in industrial employment would, in fact, be to enable the National Labour Exchange to find places, at the time

of "decasualisation," for at least as many men as the "Decasualisation of Casual Labour" and Suppression of Under-employment would leave on its hands.

(ii.) *The Reduction of the Hours of Labour of Railway and Tramway Servants*

We look for a gradual reduction of the daily hours of labour in practically all industries. Just as the fourteen hours' day common in the eighteenth century gave way to the twelve hours' day of the opening of the nineteenth, and this again successively to the ten hours' day of a couple of generations ago, and to the nine hours' day of 1871, so we anticipate that, at no distant date, we shall regard as normal the eight hours' day already obtained in various industries. This, however, has, in our view, little bearing on Unemployment, and none at all on Under-employment. In most cases the improvement in industrial organisation, the universal "speeding up" of work, and the diminution of those spells and intervals which, in the longer day, so greatly mitigated the severity of the toil, have resulted in the workers, in most manufacturing processes, at each successive reduction of hours, turning out practically as much product as before. Though the working hours have been reduced, the number of men employed has not thereby been increased. The social and economic advantage of the shortening of the working day, which we think it difficult to exaggerate, are to be found in the increased opportunities which it affords for recreation and self-improvement, and the duties of family life and citizenship.

In one great industry, however, that of the railway service, together with the allied omnibus and tramway services, the working day of nearly all the workers is still greatly in excess of what is socially desirable. The excessive hours of duty of engine-drivers and firemen, guards and porters, and tramway and omnibus drivers and conductors still amount, we regret to say, to a public scandal. It is not in the public interest that men should be on duty for twelve, fourteen, and occasionally even eighteen hours

out of the twenty-four; or that they should resume duty after less than ten or twelve hours' interval. The failure of voluntary effort to obtain a reduction of hours led Parliament in 1892 to pass into law the Regulation of Railways Act, under which the Board of Trade was empowered, on being satisfied that the hours of labour of any railway servant were excessive, to require the railway company to submit a new and improved schedule of working hours. Under this Act, which has been slowly enforced by the Board of Trade, a certain improvement has taken place in the course of the fifteen years, especially in the hours of signalmen in busy signal-boxes, who now usually enjoy an eight hours' day.

The hours of most grades of railway operatives are, however, under nearly all the companies, still excessive. The Board of Trade Returns do not now reveal the exact hours of duty of the railway men; and no account is taken of any instances of less than a twelve hours' day, which often means, not forty-eight, but eighty-four hours per week. Yet in the one month of October 1907, no fewer than 113,490 cases were reported by the railway companies themselves of men who were kept on duty for more than twelve hours in the day. Even deducting the time spent in travelling home (which is, however, rightly paid for as time given to the employer's service), there were no fewer than 56,180 cases in which men were kept on arduous and responsible duty for thirteen hours or more in a day—some of them for fifteen and even for eighteen hours. That such excessive hours of duty are not really required by the exigencies of railway administration, or by the accidents of fog or breakdown, provided proper arrangements are made, is demonstrated by the fact that the Great Central Railway Company, in the same month of October 1907, was able to report that scarcely any of its passenger train workers, and a tiny percentage only of its goods train workers had ever once exceeded twelve hours' duty.

The evil is not confined to the railway service. The great majority of tramway conductors and drivers in the United Kingdom still apparently work, not, for forty-eight

but for seventy, and occasionally as much as eighty or ninety hours per week; and even those directly in the services of the Municipal Authorities administering their own tramways usually work for twelve hours a day. The day's duty, too, is often made more harassing by being "split" between two turns, with an interval between, so that from start to finish the man is away from home for as much as sixteen or eighteen hours. The work of the omnibus drivers and conductors usually extends to eighty and even ninety hours per week.

Here there is no question of a new principle being involved. For the past twenty years the Board of Trade has intervened, in order to secure, by means of the powers deliberately entrusted to it by Parliament, shorter hours of labour for adult men. We think that the time has come when this intervention should become systematic, covering the whole field of the railway, tramway and omnibus services; and that those responsible for the administration of these services should be required to submit schedules providing that no man's ordinary duty should exceed if not forty-eight, at any rate, as a maximum, sixty hours in any one week, or should be so divided as to deprive him of proper intervals for sleep, recreation, and the duties of family life.

This reform is advocated and required for its own sake. But such a reduction of the hours of duty of these classes of operatives would have the further advantage of actually increasing the number of men required in an occupation where employment is exceptionally stable and regular. If undertaken concurrently with the suppression of Under-employment, it would undoubtedly enable the National Labour Exchange to find places, not necessarily for the particular men thereby displaced, but for a number of men equivalent to a large proportion of the surplus labour thereby revealed and identified.

(iii.) *The Withdrawal from Industrial Wage-Earning of the Mothers of Young Children*

We have seen that, of the 50,000 widows and deserted wives whom the Poor Law Authorities of the United Kingdom elect to maintain on Outdoor Relief, mainly because of their 135,000 children under fourteen, the vast majority are driven to engage in industrial work, notwithstanding their receipt of Outdoor Relief, because this is deliberately fixed at a rate inadequate for their support. It has long been the policy of the Local Government Board for England and Wales, as well as of that for Scotland, that Outdoor Relief or Aliment, where given at all, should always be adequate for the proper support of the family. It is obvious that, where there are young children, it is suicidal for the nation to drive the mother to earn money in industry, at the expense of so neglecting the children that they grow up, if they grow up at all, stunted, weak and untrained, and almost inevitably destined to recruit the ranks of the Under-employed and of Pauperism. Yet this, as we have seen, is what is happening to-day.

An analogous evil is taking place among the majority of the Unemployed and the Under-employed. Because the man's earnings cease, or are small and uncertain, the wife is driven to earn money at the laundry, or by "charing," by taking work out to be done at home in all the "sweated" trades, or in the thousand and one ways in which hard-driven women toil for a few shillings a week in London and other great cities.

Under a reformed administration such as we propose, the mothers of young children will not be driven to neglect their home duties by engaging in industrial work. If the widow, or other mother to whom Home Aliment is allowed, is not actually unfit to have the charge of her children, the Registrar of Public Assistance will, in accordance with the policy hitherto pressed in vain on the Boards of Guardians, peremptorily see to it that the amount allowed to her is sufficient for the proper support of the family group. The children will be, in effect,

- “boarded-out” with their own mother; and it will naturally be a condition of such Home Aliment that she devotes her time and energy to their upbringing, and not to the industrial work which, with its concomitant neglect of the children, is as uneconomical to the nation as it is distasteful to every good mother. Similarly, when we get the Under-employed men, by the operation of the National Labour Exchange, regularly getting five or six days’ work a week; and the Unemployed getting either prompt work or the provision that we shall presently describe—this, too, so far as made for the support of wife and children, being conditional on the mother giving her time and energy to her own children—the wives will, at any rate, not be driven to neglect their homes by engaging in industrial work in order to keep the household from starvation. There is, as we have seen, a consensus of testimony that it is the chronic Under-employment of the men, not any craving of the women to leave their home duties, that causes the greater part of the industrial work of wives and mothers. Concurrently with the operations of the National Labour Exchange for the Suppression of Under-employment, we may accordingly count on a considerable voluntary withdrawal of wives and mothers from industrial wage-earning; leaving, therefore, directly or indirectly, in the various rearrangements of industry that will be taking place, many vacancies to be filled by men.

It is not, of course, suggested that the particular work heretofore done by the boys and girls, by the railway and tramway workers and by the mothers of families should be given to the particular men displaced by “decasualisation.” What would happen would be that each employer would so re-arrange his employment of labour as to get his work done as conveniently as before, taking on, as additional hands, the most efficient men that he could obtain. These would leave vacancies which would tend to be filled by men who would otherwise have furnished the daily recruitment of the Under-employed that now goes on; or by the younger, the more energetic of those already in that great army. It is in this way that the

total number of those at present Under-employed would be reduced to the number who could get fairly continuous employment. It is not necessary to imagine that the most demoralised and deteriorated man among the casual dock labourers would be able to become either a railway signalman, a telegraph messenger, or a shirt-maker.

(c) *The Regularisation of the National Demand
for Labour*

We have given prominence to the Absorption of Labour by the three desirable reforms that we have just described, apart from the usual expansion of industry, because the nation cannot be expected to undertake even so great an improvement as the Suppression of Under-employment, without adequate assurance that its industry would not thereby be crippled at times by lack of hands, or that openings could be found for the Casual Labourers who would be no longer required as such. But apart from preventing the weary and demoralising aimless hunt for work, and diminishing the present "leakage" of time between jobs, the National Labour Exchange will not prevent Unemployment, whenever the total volume of the business of the nation, and even of all the nations of the world, falls off in those periodical depressions of trade of which we have, as yet, no complete explanation. In the years 1826; 1839-42, 1847, 1857-8, 1867-9, 1878-9, 1884-7, 1892-5, 1903-5 and 1908-9 such cyclical trade depressions of general character have sent up the percentage of Unemployed workmen to three, four and even five times as many as in the better years. The proportion of Trade Union members in Unions paying Out of Work Benefit (as to whom alone there are yet any statistics), who retain their situations, falls from the 97 or 98 per cent characteristic of good years, to 92 or even to 89 per cent. This means that something like a couple of hundred thousand skilled workmen in the United Kingdom find themselves, through no fault of their own, without work or wages, and unable, whatever their character or their efforts, for a prolonged period to get employment.

At the same time all the various grades of unskilled and general labourers find their employment more than usually intermittent, and all the evils of Underemployment and of the seasonal fluctuations are intensified. The National Labour Exchange will be more than ever useful in these years of depression in demonstrating and accurately measuring the surplus of applicants over situations. But it cannot fill vacancies that do not exist. What is needed in the lean years, which we must expect to recur once or twice in every decade, though we cannot yet accurately predict their dates—what is required as much for the skilled men as for the labourers—is some means of keeping the demand for their services at a uniform level.

We think that the Government can do a great deal to regularise the aggregate demand for labour as between one year and another, by a more deliberate arrangement of its orders for work of a capital nature.

"In round numbers," deposed our most distinguished statistician, "it may be estimated that 200,000 or fewer able-bodied adult males are out of work from non-seasonal causes one year with another, and have no sufficient resources, and that this number fluctuates between 100,000 in the best year, to 300,000 in the worst. . . . The economic and industrial problem is to re-arrange the demand for labour to the extent indicated by these numbers. . . . There is consequently a need, in the worst year, for wages to the extent of £10,000,000 to bring it to a level with the best, so far as these men are concerned; for the whole of the last ten years £40,000,000 would have sufficed. The annual wages bill of the country is estimated at £700,000,000. . . . Is it possible for the Government and other public bodies who employ labour in large quantities to counteract the industrial ebb and flow of demand by inducing a complementary flow and ebb; by withdrawing part of their demand when industry needs all the labour it can get, and increasing the demand when industry is slack? To have a useful effect this alteration would have to be commensurable with the sum named above (£40,000,000 in ten years)."

We think that there can be no doubt that, out of the 150 millions sterling annually expended by the National and Local Authorities on works and services, it would be possible to earmark at least four millions a year, as not to be undertaken equally, year by year, as a matter of

course; but to be undertaken, out of loan, on a ten years' programme, at unequal annual rates, to the extent even of ten or fifteen millions in a single year, at those periods when the National Labour Exchange reported that the number of able-bodied applicants, for whom no places could be found anywhere within the United Kingdom, was rising above the normal level. When this report was made by the Minister responsible for the National Labour Exchange—whenever, for instance, the Percentage Unemployment Index as now calculated rose above four—the various Government Departments would recur to their ten years' programme of capital outlay; the Admiralty would put in hand a special battleship, and augment its stock of guns and projectiles; the War Office would give orders for some of the additional barracks that are always being needed, and would further replenish its multifarious stores; the Office of Works would get on more quickly with its perpetual task of erecting new post offices and other Government buildings, and of renewing the worn-out furniture; the Post Office would proceed at three or four times its accustomed rate with the extension of the telegraph and telephone to every village in the kingdom; even the Stationery Office would get on two or three times as fast as usual with the printing of the volumes of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and the publication of the national archives. But much more could be done. It is plain that many millions have to be spent in the next few decades in rebuilding the worst of the elementary schools, greatly adding to the number of the secondary schools, multiplying the technical institutes and training colleges, and doubling and trebling the accommodation and equipment of our fifteen universities. All this building and furnishing work, on which alone we might usefully spend the forty millions per decade that are in question, is not in fact, and need not be for efficiency, done in equal annual instalments. There might well be a ten years' programme of capital Grants-in-Aid of the local expenditure on educational buildings and equipment. It requires only the stimulus of these Grants-in-Aid, made at the periods when the Minister in

charge of the National Labour Exchange reports that the Index Number of Unemployment has reached the Warning Point, for these works to be put in hand by the Local Education Authorities all over the kingdom to exactly the extent that the situation demands. At the same time the Local Authorities could be incited to undertake their ordinary municipal undertakings of a capital nature, whether tramways or waterworks, public baths or electric power stations, artisans dwellings or Town Halls, drainage works or street improvements, to a greater extent in the years of slackness than in the years of good trade. This, indeed, they are already tending to do; and to the great development of municipal enterprise in this direction, setting up a small ebb and flow of its own to some extent counteracting the flow and ebb of private industry, we are inclined to attribute the fact that the cyclical depressions of the last twenty years have been less severely felt in the United Kingdom than were those of 1878-9 and of 1839-42.

What we are proposing is not that the Government or the Local Authorities should start Relief Works. It is, indeed, the very opposite of the Relief Works for the employment of the Unemployed to which we have been accustomed:—

“A scheme of this kind,” continues Mr. Bowley, “would differ from a crude form of Relief Works in four important ways:—

“(a) The work concerned would be started before Unemployment became acute, say, when the Percentage Unemployed Index reached 4 per cent.

“(b) There would be no artificial demand made for labour, only an adjustment in time of the ordinary demand.

“(c) The Unemployed, as a class, would not be attracted, *for the demand would come through ordinary trade sources*, and before there was any considerable dearth of employment.

“(d) The wages paid would be measured only by the work done, being contracted out on the ordinary commercial basis.

“Such a scheme need involve no expenditure, save of thought and of forethought; is of the nature of prevention rather than of cure; and in proportion as the scale of its operation was sufficient would remove the principal legitimate cause of dissatisfaction of the genuine workman with industrial conditions.”

It is, in fact, vital to this plan of Regularising the Demand for Labour that there should be no attempt to employ the Unemployed as such. The men and women taken on would be picked out for employment, in the ordinary way, because they seemed the most efficient at their trades, and the most suitable for the service required. They would be taken on exactly in the numbers, and in the proportions between grade and grade, as was required for the most economical and efficient execution of the work. It would be quite immaterial whether they were momentarily out of a job or whether they relinquished other employment to take up what seemed a better engagement. In short, whether the works put in hand are done by direct employment (as at Woolwich Arsenal, the Army Clothing Factory or the Government Dockyards), or put out to contract (as with some warships, most of the buildings and stores, and all the furniture and printing), it is essential that they should be done *in the ordinary way*, by the departments or contractors ordinarily concerned, and by the best of the available workmen and labourers usually engaged in just those kinds of work, taken on because their services are wanted, and without any regard to whether or not they are "out of a job." They would have absolutely no connection or contact with whatever provisions were made for the men in want or in destitution. It is not the function of these enterprises to relieve distress—that will, as we have presently to describe, be otherwise provided for—but to prevent, long before they fall into distress, the two or three hundred thousand good and efficient workmen from becoming Unemployed.

The works that the National Government or the Local Authorities might, in this way, put in hand in the lean years of the trade cycle, need not, of course, be confined to the kinds that we have mentioned, or to those to which we have hitherto been accustomed. It has, in particular, been pressed upon us by many witnesses that considerable schemes of Afforestation might advantageously be undertaken by the Government; and one estate in the West of Scotland has actually been acquired for that purpose. Moreover, the attention called to the loss of land by erosion of the

coast at various points has led to proposals for Coast Protection and Land Reclamation, for which it has been suggested that "the Unemployed" could be engaged. These latter proposals are under the consideration of a separate Royal Commission, whose Report will doubtless show to what extent and under what conditions any such works could usefully be undertaken. It is, however, clear that, to the extent that it may be profitable for the nation to engage in either Afforestation or Land Reclamation, these enterprises should be undertaken, not as Relief Works for the Unemployed, but as public enterprises of national importance, valuable in themselves, but, as we should suggest, executed out of loans on a ten years' programme; and, within the decade, made to vary in volume, in such a way, as far as may be practicable, as to ebb and flow in a manner complementary to the flow and ebb of private industry. Both Afforestation and Land Reclamation have the advantage that they can be done in intermittent spells, the progress made and the staff employed being capable of graduation according to need. But neither Afforestation nor Land Reclamation can be done by men quite unskilled in these occupations. In both cases experience shows that the work is of a kind that is within the compass, if there is to be economy and efficiency, of particular classes of labourers, and of these classes only. It is work for which they have been more or less trained, and akin to that on which they are usually employed. It is these men who ought to be engaged for the work, whenever, in accordance with the report of the Minister responsible for the National Labour Exchange, it is decided to undertake it, or to augment the staff upon it—not a heterogeneous crowd of men drawn from those who have applied for relief in the large towns. The work of planting trees, for instance, can best be done by the agriculturists out of work; and so long as any such can be hired by the local superintendent of the plantation, there is no reason why townsmen should be brought down to do it. To start making embankments and sea-walls with distressed tailors and bricklayers and clerks, when there are navvies looking for employment, is as great a wrong to the navvies (and as uneconomical) as

it would be to take on the navvies at the Army Clothing Factory or to put them to build a new school. Each work, in short, should be undertaken, not by any Distress Committee or Unemployment Authority, but by the particular Department requiring it; and should be executed by the best and most efficient of the men accustomed to that kind of work who can, at the time, be found and hired in the ordinary way. Under these conditions we think that the Board of Agriculture might well take its share with the other public Departments in regularising the national demand for labour; and might always therefore have on hand extensive works of Afforestation and Land Reclamation, to be done out of loan, and executed on a ten years' programme, for which it would take on men, or place contracts, to a greater or smaller extent each year, according to the reports of the National Labour Exchange as to the state of the Labour Market.

It is an advantage of this method of executing the public enterprises of capital value which the nation requires during each decade, that it is actually cheaper than doing them, year by year, without thought of the Labour Market. For (what is usually forgotten) capital is Unemployed and Under-employed to at least as great an extent as labour. It is in the lean years of the trade cycle, when business is depressed, that most capital is Unemployed, and the Bank rate is at its lowest. It is, accordingly, just in the years that Government works are needed in order to keep up the National Demand for Labour that Government can borrow at the cheapest rate. The influence of this fact upon municipal enterprise has, in the last two decades, been most marked. It has, however, as yet scarcely affected the ordering of the national expenditure of a capital nature; partly, perhaps, because the Treasury book-keeping excludes, deliberately, anything in the nature of a capital account, and insists on regarding all expenditure within the year as chargeable exclusively to the income of that year. Yet to concentrate in the lean years most of the whole capital outlay of each decennium is clearly to reduce the cost of the works. This consideration enables us also to see that the undertaking of such works by the Govern-

ment in the lean years does not, as is sometimes thoughtlessly alleged, cause as much Unemployment as it prevents. On the contrary, it actually increases the total volume of industry for the decade as a whole. It is objected that if the Government spends a pound on employing labour, it has to take that same amount from the taxpayer, who thereupon has necessarily to reduce his own expenditure on labour. But this is to ignore the fact that, in the years of trade depression, if the Government (which need not be subject to depression) sets the machine in motion, it may use, not the proceeds of taxes, but Unemployed floating capital, and mills and plant that are temporarily Under-employed, to employ the labour. If the Government, in years of depression, when no one else is willing to embark in new undertakings, borrows some of the capital that is lying idle and unused—offered, in fact, in vain at 2 or 3 per cent per annum—in order to augment its own enterprises, it interferes with no taxpayer's employment of his coachmen or gardeners. Even those from whom the capital has been borrowed increase rather than decrease their personal expenditure. Thus there is in this way a real addition to industry. That which would otherwise have been idle is set to productive work. There is here, not merely a Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour, but actually an increase, taking the ten years as a whole, over what would otherwise have been demanded. The interest and sinking fund on the loans raised in the lean years has, of course, to be met, but the nation has by that time the advantage of the new work; and the charge falls, moreover, largely on the years of good trade and high profits, when a curb on private expenditure is, from the standpoint of Regularising the National Demand for Labour, a positive advantage.

(D) *The Provision for the Unemployed*

However effective may be the National Labour Exchange in getting men into continuous employment; however great may prove the opportunities of absorption afforded by limiting the labour of boys and the excessive

it would be to take on the navvies at the Army Clothing Factory or to put them to build a new school. Each work, in short, should be undertaken, not by any Distress Committee or Unemployment Authority, but by the particular Department requiring it; and should be executed by the best and most efficient of the men accustomed to that kind of work who can, at the time, be found and hired in the ordinary way. Under these conditions we think that the Board of Agriculture might well take its share with the other public Departments in regularising the national demand for labour; and might always therefore have on hand extensive works of Afforestation and Land Reclamation, to be done out of loan, and executed on a ten years' programme, for which it would take on men, or place contracts, to a greater or smaller extent each year, according to the reports of the National Labour Exchange as to the state of the Labour Market.

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nearly all (27) the principal towns of Belgium; and now in course of imitation in France (since 1905), Norway (since 1906), Denmark (since 1907), Belgium (since 1907), several Dutch towns, and by St. Gall. (since 1905), Basle (since 1908), and Strassburg (since 1906)—a contribution is annually made to the Trade Union equal to something like half of the amount actually paid in Out-of-Work Benefit to members unemployed in the last completed year, apart from any strike or other collective dispute. This contribution from public funds to Trade Unions giving Out-of-Work Benefit has, to quote the words of the Board of Trade, "undoubtedly, in certain cases at least, been accompanied by a great development of Unemployed Benefits on the part of Trade Unions anxious to participate." What was before financially out of the reach of many of the Trade Unions has now become possible to them, with the result that a greater proportion of the workmen are protected from falling into distress from want of employment. "Insurance," reports the Board of Trade, "is thus encouraged both by the Trade Union motive of protecting the Standard Rate, and by the prospect of a bonus from without. Pressure to join a Trade Union is—at a price—converted by the Municipality into pressure to insure against Unemployment." We think that a similar inducement should be offered in the United Kingdom with a view, not only to helping the Trade Unions that already insure, but also to inducing the million other Trade Unionists, not at present enjoying this protection, to subscribe for Out-of-Work Benefit.

A further encouragement might well be afforded to the provident workman. As a large proportion of the situations in the skilled trades are not of the nature of casual employment, but do, as a matter of fact, last for a month or more (or could easily be so arranged as to do so), it would not be compulsory for these to be filled through the National Labour Exchange. It might even be desirable to make arrangements also for the shorter engagements and "casual" jobs of the skilled mechanics in such trades to be independently organised. It might be well to provide that where a Trade Union, giving Out-of-Work Benefit,

desired (perhaps in conjunction with an organisation of employers) to manage its own register of men unemployed and situations vacant, it would be permitted to do so in close connection with the National Labour Exchange, which would transfer to it at once any application notified by its members, or by the employers in that trade who were in the habit of dealing with the Trade Union, and not fill any such situations unless and until the special office for the trade failed to do so. In this way there would be secured, to those workers in any trade who had been provident enough to insure themselves against Unemployment, a practical preference for the employment thus offered in that trade. This conjunction of the Trade Union Register of unemployed workmen with the National Labour Exchange is, as we have already mentioned, coming to be a common feature in Germany, and is also working well in the London Labour Exchanges.

We have had it suggested to us that insurance against Unemployment might be universally extended if it were made compulsory. The idea of throwing upon the employers and workmen of particular trades, and through them on the consumers, the burden of the irregularity of employment in these trades has many attractions, but we cannot see that the universal and compulsory union of all the employers and all the workmen in an insurance fund is, even with Government aid, either practicable or desirable. It is worth notice that no such scheme has found a place in the elaborate proposals of the German Government for workmen's insurance; or has been adopted elsewhere. We do not see how, without the aid afforded by Trade Union organisation, a Compulsory Insurance scheme could possibly be worked in such a way as both to provide, for the "bad risks"—the men who, for one reason or another, are constantly falling into Unemployment—and yet to take care that these men embrace every opportunity of getting into situations. Moreover, these "bad risks" are, even under the sharp superintendence of a Trade Union, always contriving to draw, each year, their maximum Out-of-Work Pay, and thus to inflict a considerable loss on the insurance funds. The same men are continually "running

out of benefit," and becoming ineligible for Out-of-Work Pay, long before they get into employment again; and hence requiring some other provision than any scheme of insurance can make. Moreover, the Trade Union can, and constantly does, exclude from its membership men who have not attained a certain degree of skill, or of regularity of conduct; exactly as a Friendly Society excludes men suffering from syphilis or phthisis, or any mortal disease. Even then insurance is beyond the reach of large sections of Trade Unionists. It would require a beneficent revolution to be effected both in the scale of remuneration and in the continuity of employment of the Casual Labourers of the great cities, and we think also, among the platers' helpers and other ship-yard labourers, and the builders' labourers, before their periods of recurrent Unemployment could be provided for by any insurance premium within their means, even with Government help. Seeing that these ill-paid labourers constitute nearly one-half of all the persons employed in their respective industries, we doubt whether any system of compulsory insurance, administered by a Government Department, could possibly provide for their great needs.

The case may be different if compulsory insurance is applied only to particular sections of workers or to certain specified industries, under carefully considered conditions. Any such plan, applicable only to a portion of the industrial field, has the drawback of not solving the problem of providing for the bulk of those in distress from Unemployment; for it would, of course, be the Casual Labourers, and generally the great army of the Under-employed, who would be omitted; and these form, as we have seen, the bulk of the applicants to the Distress Committees. Hence a plan of compulsory insurance for some classes of skilled artisans, or for the more regularly employed workers generally, could not be substituted, either for the existing provision under the Unemployed Workmen Act, or for any improvement on it. It could, at best, be only an adjunct to a comprehensive scheme of dealing with Unemployment. But such a scheme of compulsory insurance, even if partial, may be worth considering for its own sake. If the

Government and the employers were financially interested in it, they would both have a motive, even if somewhat indirect and remote, for reducing Unemployment to a minimum. It seems to us clear, however, that two conditions would be essential. No such scheme could possibly be worked without a national organisation in the nature of a Labour Exchange, to which all available vacancies were reported, and to which all insured workmen out of employment were required to apply for situations. Without machinery of this sort, it would never be possible for the administrators of the insurance fund to be sure that the workman claiming benefit was really unable to obtain a situation. The "bad risks" would, in any case, constitute a serious drain on the fund; and without some means of ensuring that definite situations were offered to them, these "industrial malingerers" would eat it up altogether. In short, resort to the National Labour Exchange would have to be made legally compulsory, in the insured industries, both upon all employers having vacancies to fill, and upon all workers claiming Unemployed Benefit. The second essential condition would be some definition of the terms upon which a workman could be required to accept a situation offered to him, under penalty of being refused the Unemployed Benefit towards which he had contributed. It is clear that an engineer or a carpenter could only be expected and required to accept a situation in his own trade, and upon the wages, hours, and other conditions customary in the locality. For the Government Insurance Fund to refuse to pay the engineer or the carpenter the Unemployed Benefit towards which these workmen had contributed, merely because they had refused to accept situations in "unfair" establishments, at wages below the recognised Standard Rate, or for hours or under other conditions of labour contrary to the customarily recognised Common Rules of the industry, would be to provoke a storm of indignation; and, indeed, to deal a mortal blow to Trade Unionism itself. It is plain that Unemployed benefit could not be refused to a workman merely because he declined to accept a situation under unreasonable conditions. The conditions which a Government Insurance

Fund would declare to be reasonable could, nowadays, hardly be other than what are commonly known as "Trade Union conditions"; namely, the rates of pay, hours of labour, methods of remuneration and other conditions of employment which have been agreed to, for each locality, by the associations of employers and employed; and which, in the absence of such agreement, are in practice obtained by the members of the Trade Unions concerned. Thus, so far as the operations of the Government Insurance Fund extended, these so-called "Trade Union conditions" would, in effect, be compulsorily enforced on all establishments.

Without these two essential conditions, a compulsory insurance scheme, even, if limited to carefully-selected sections of the wage-earners, would, in our opinion, be financially impracticable, and inimical to Trade Unionism. In view of the difficulties which so great an extension of the principle of compulsion would present, we prefer to recommend the simpler plan, already successfully put in practice in other countries, which involves no compulsion at all, namely that of a subvention to Trade Unions providing Unemployed Benefit, such as we have already described.

(ii.) *Maintenance under Training*

We have to face the fact that, make what arrangements we will, there will be, at all times and under any organisation of society, a residuum of men who will be found in distress from want of employment. That residuum will be greater or smaller in proportion to the appropriateness and the completeness of the organisation of the National Labour Exchange, the Suppression of Under-employment, the "dovetailing" of seasonal occupations, the measures taken for the Absorption of the Surplus, the Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour, and the development of Trade Union Insurance. It will, moreover, always wax and wane according to the changing circumstances of particular industries. But great or small, though the individuals will come and go, a residuum will always be there.

We may, however, confidently anticipate that the permanent residuum of men in distress from want of employment will differ very considerably, both in numbers and in composition, from the crowds that now embarrass the Distress Committees at every season of depression. The great bulk of these crowds—at least, one-half of the whole—consists at present of the Casual Labourers, and other members of the chronically Under-employed class; the suppression of which, as a class, is (as we have shown) not only possible but a necessary condition of any improvement whatsoever. When the National Labour Exchange has got thoroughly to work, and has “dove-tailed” the jobs so as to provide practical continuity of employment; and when the surplus thereupon revealed and identified has been to a large extent absorbed by the measures that we have described, there is no reason to suppose that this part of the industrial army will furnish a larger contingent of persons in distress through Unemployment than other parts enjoying no higher remuneration do at present. Another important element is to-day contributed by the building trades and other seasonal industries; and these, as we have seen, can be provided for—the better-paid sections by an extension of Trade Union Insurance, and the labourers, to a large, and probably a steadily increasing, extent, by the operations of the National Labour Exchange in “dovetailing” employment as between trades having different seasons of slackness. Even the men now out of work through the great cyclical fluctuations of the nation's industry can, as we have shown, be to a great extent provided for by the measures to be taken for the Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour, and by the great extension of Trade Union Insurance that this Regularisation, the work of the National Labour Exchange, and a Government subvention will have made possible. Thus, instead of whole sections and whole classes coming on our hands at every season of stress, what we shall have to deal with will be individuals of all classes.

The individual members of the permanent residuum of men in distress from Unemployment will be of the most

heterogeneous kinds and descriptions. There will be the man from Class I., who has fallen out of a permanent situation; who was uninsured because there was no Trade Union to which he could belong, whose savings have been exhausted by illness or other family misfortune; who bears a good character, but for whom the National Labour Exchange fails to find a place—perhaps because of his advancing years, or the lack of adaptability which is the result of his long and faithful service in one narrow groove. There will be the man from Class II., whose discontinuous employment has suddenly become so intermittent that nowhere in the United Kingdom can the National Labour Exchange find him a job; whose Unemployment is so prolonged that he “runs out of benefit” and exhausts his savings. Both these men may be suffering, probably unconsciously to themselves, from a change of process or of industrial organisation, which is steadily and permanently enabling their particular service to be partly dispensed with—a case which is to-day that of various grades of boot and shoe operatives, that of the carpenters and bricklayers, and that of grooms and stablemen. And from all grades and sections of industry there will dribble down—we may hope, when chronic Underemployment and untrained Boy Labour are suppressed, to a smaller extent than at present—individuals of defective will, intelligence, or training; of dissolute habits or irregularities of character; or of chronically weak physical health; together with all sorts of industrial “misfits,” and, intermingled among them all, the constitutionally vagabond or “work-shy.” It is indispensable, alike for social health and for the success of all the other measures taken to deal with the Able-bodied, that the heterogeneous assortment of “Unemployed,” whose existence we have been unable to prevent, should be definitely and adequately provided for. There must be no idea of deterring people from applying. It is, in fact, an essential for industrial well-being that every person in distress from want of employment should receive at once the Public Assistance appropriate to his need, as it is to Public Health that no sick person should go unprovided with medical attendance.

It will, we think, be clear that, for this heterogeneous assortment of individuals, there can be no question of "making work" or providing productive employment at wages. The steps taken by the Government for the Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour and the Absorption of the Surplus will, in fact, have already found employment, at their own trades and at the Standard Rates of wages, for the men for whom any such work can be provided. To deliberately "make work" for the odds and ends of Unemployed tailors, jewellers, brickmakers, ironmoulders, clerks, hawthorn men and hawkers—for each of them in his own trade, in his own town, at his own Standard Rate of Wages—is not only administratively impossible, but would actually have the effect of ousting from employment some other men of these trades. For, apart from the personal factor, the reason why Unemployment has fallen upon men of these particular trades, rather than upon others, is that the consumers' demand for their particular services, or for the products of their labour, happens to have temporarily or permanently diminished, relatively to the consumers' demand for other services or products. To increase the supply of waistcoats, jewellery, bricks and iron-mouldings, merely in order to give employment in trades which are already suffering from surplus stocks, would be a suicidal proceeding. As a matter of fact, the costliness and the impracticability of providing work "at his own trade" for each of the Unemployed Workmen has saved us from the dilemma. What is actually demanded, and what is occasionally provided in response to this demand, is "work which all can perform."

But it is a fallacy to assume that there is such a thing as work, in the abstract, or of an undifferentiated character. The work that is of any use to the world is always the doing of some specific service, which, however humble and nominally "unskilled," always needs a certain amount of training, experience, and even skill to perform efficiently. A favourite idea is to put the men to cultivate the land. But agriculture is, of course, a highly skilled and very hazardous trade. Even digging—which, however well

done, produces no value, unless directed by very expert knowledge—requires training to do it effectively, whilst the planting of trees, or the making of a road, an embankment or a sea-wall turns out, on experiment, to be a skilled occupation, of which the raw hand makes a sad botch. Repeated experience has proved, in fact, that there is no productive enterprise, even of the simplest character, which can be undertaken without actual loss by a mixed assortment of individuals of different grades of skill, of all sorts of antecedents, and, for the most part, without experience of the particular kind of work they are called upon to perform. In some respects, indeed, the more superior the men and the more specialised their former callings, the more wholly incompetent they prove at the “common work” which alone can be provided for them. Under these circumstances the men not only fail to earn their keep, which would under any form of provision have to be given them; in nearly every case they fail to produce even the cost of the necessary expert direction and supervision, which is actual out-of-pocket expense to the community. Nor is it ever possible to arrive at any satisfactory standard of wages. The heterogeneous crowd of men of different antecedents clearly cannot be paid the various Standard Rates to which they have severally been accustomed. If it is determined to pay them the usual Standard Rate for the common work to which they have been put, and to pay them in accordance with their achievements, this results in their earning a shilling or two a day; or less than they can exist on. But the costliness of this method of providing for the Unemployed, and the difficulty of finding any satisfactory scale of remuneration, do not, in our opinion, constitute the gravest objections to Relief Works. The first question, to our mind, is, How does this method of provision affect the men subjected to it? Does it make them more fit and better qualified to regain their places in the industrial world, or less fit and worse qualified? It is clear, of course, that adequate maintenance, with any sort of occupation, is better for a workman than starvation and idleness. But no one who has ever watched Relief Works,

in any form, or under any administration, can be satisfied with the effect of this kind of provision on the men to whom it is given. The work itself is monotonous and uneducational in character, even when it is not positively detrimental to particular forms of manual skill. With a heterogeneous gang of men, taken on, not because they are used to the work, and can be expected to perform it up to any normal standard, of speed or efficiency, but merely because they are in distress from Unemployment, it is invariably found impracticable to discover and to exact from every man the full amount of effort of which he is capable. Inevitably, even if unconsciously, the pace is set for all by the slowest, the least efficient, and often the least willing of the gang. This has a grave effect on the whole gang. Thus the men put on Relief Works are in no way improving themselves for resuming work at their own trades; they are not being trained to other occupations so that they might find work in new directions; and they are steadily being more and more habituated to work at a low standard of speed, a low standard of effort, and a low standard of efficiency, at an occupation which is already chronically oversupplied with workers. For the "common work" thus provided for the heterogeneous assortment of men from all trades always turns out to be the appropriate work of the navvy and "ground labourer." Why is it that the advocates of work for the "Unemployed" of all trades never see anything objectionable in depriving the navvy of some of the jobs on which he would otherwise have been employed? Why, when it is sought to set the Unemployed to work, and when it is discovered that this involves training of some sort, should we always exercise them, and train them in the trade of the navvy, and thereby increase the number of competitors of the existing navvies? The position is made the more ridiculous in that it has been abundantly demonstrated that it is just this kind of mere muscular effort and physical strength for which, there is, in the industrial world of to-day, a steadily diminishing demand. It is the man who pushes, who lifts, who carries, who drags, who is finding more and more of his employment superseded by

the hoist and the pulley, by the grain elevator and the travelling crane, by the "grab" and the "Scotsman" and the "iron man"—in short, by steam or electrically driven machinery of one kind or another.

But Relief Works for the Unemployed represent only a counsel of despair, in a community knowing no better alternative. The reduction in the numbers of those in distress from Unemployment, brought about by the various preventive measures that we have described, will enable the community to deal with the individuals in distress, not by such "wholesale" methods as Relief Works, but, personally, one by one, after careful consideration of each case, by the treatment best calculated to enable him to resume productive employment.

The first requisite is that all persons in distress from Unemployment should be provided with maintenance, so that they and their families may be kept in health and strength, and be prevented from the rapid deterioration to which they would otherwise be subjected. But this maintenance must be merely preliminary to attempting to solve the particular "human problem" that each man presents. What has to be discovered is why these particular individuals, out of the 12,000,000 whom employers have willingly engaged, have been left stranded and unemployed; and how their industrial efficiency can be increased so as to enable them to earn a livelihood. The first thing to be done is, to "test" them, using the word in its proper sense, not of seeking how to induce them to take themselves off our hands, but of probing their capacity so as to find out the points at which they are weak, and can be strengthened, and the faculties latent in them which might be developed. No one can have watched the crowd of applicants to a Distress Committee—the scores of narrow-chested men under thirty, the emaciated and flabby men of all ages, the nerveless and rheumatic men, the men with varicose veins or untreated hernia—without realising how sadly "out of condition" are nearly all these "Unemployed," and how enormously their working power would be improved by mere medical advice, hygienic regimen, and

physical training. We have to test their eyesight, their colour vision, their hearing, their hearts, their muscular power, the steadiness of their hands, in order to find out what particular exercises or remedies will increase their capacity. Nor must we stop at mere physical improvement. In the rough and tumble of industrial life, with its monotonous toil in narrow grooves, the adult workman tends to leave dormant all but the one faculty required for his job. The man who has dropped out of a situation which he has held for ten or twenty years would probably have been equally efficient in any one of half a dozen other ways, if he had not been led to adapt himself to the particular line required by his employer. Now that he has lost that situation, and no similar one can be found for him, what has to be done is to see which of his undeveloped or dormant faculties can be stimulated and exercised. But there are moral invalids as well as physical ones. The men who have lost situations through irregularity of conduct of one kind or another plainly need training in character, under the beneficent influence of continuous order and discipline. In short, whatever may have been the economic or industrial cause that has necessitated a certain number of the nation's workers standing idle—and this cause may often be no fault of the workers themselves—it is inevitable that the *particular individuals* who, in that crisis, find themselves the rejected of all employers should be capable of improvement, either physical or mental, or both. Which of us, indeed, is *not* capable of improvement by careful testing and training? We can clearly best utilise the period of enforced Unemployment by placing these men in training, so that, when the National Labour Exchange eventually finds openings for them, they may return to work in better health, or more regular habits, and with awakened faculties of body and mind. As has been well said, "The capacity of the industrial system to absorb fresh labour is no doubt far from exhausted, but this capacity depends entirely upon the labour being of a sort to be absorbed, that is to say, being suited or able to become suited to the particular developments of the time."

The National Authority dealing with the Able-bodied requires, therefore, what we might almost term a Human Sorting House, where each man's faculties would be tested to see what could be made of him; and a series of Training Establishments, to one or other of which the heterogeneous residuum of Unemployed would be assigned. These Training Establishments might, some of them, be in the man's own town, so that he need not be separated from his home; though it would be a condition that he should attend with absolute regularity from morning to night. For the young unmarried man, it would probably be best to send him at once to a residential settlement in the country, where he would be free from the distractions of town life. But whether in town or country, it is essential to successful treatment that the training should take up the man's entire day. If he is not at a residential Colony, he will be required to be in attendance at 6 A.M., as he would be if he were in employment; and as the day's training will need to be diversified, and must include organised recreation of various kinds, his obligatory attendance will usually be prolonged until eight or nine at night. This is not the place for any detailed plans of the curriculum and the regimen of these Training Establishments; which would, indeed, have to be worked out for men of different ages, different weaknesses, and different needs. But we can foresee that carefully graduated physical exercises will play a large part; that men of definite trades can be given opportunities for improving their skill and enlarging the range of their capacity in those trades; that practically all men can usefully be taught mechanical drawing, and working to plan and to scale; that they can all usefully improve their mental arithmetic and their power of keeping accounts; that all men nowadays need to know the use of the common tools and how to run the simpler machines; that many men have a desire, at least, to try their hands at the cultivation of the land, and these might well be put to the farm and garden work; and, seeing that all men would be the better for the seaman's knowledge of how to cook, how to clean, and how to mend and

wash, there is every reason why all the men should take their share of the necessary work of the establishment.

We think that the proposal of Maintenance under Training avoids the grave defects that characterise the devices of the Poor Law and the "Employment Relief" of the Distress Committees. It is, to say the least, quite as "productive" to the community, as the occupations afforded by the General Mixed Workhouse, or the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, or as any "work at wages" to which the "Unemployed" are now being set by the Local Authorities; whilst it is far more "productive" than these to the man himself. Moreover, it escapes the demoralising element of pretence that the men are earning their own livelihood and have therefore the right to receive wages and to spend them as they choose. It avoids the economic dilemma of how to "set to work" the Unemployed in productive labour without taking away other men's jobs. And it escapes the administrative difficulty of how to keep up the Standard Wage and work the Normal Day without lowering the standard of effort and attracting men from low-paid employment. It avoids even the industrial disadvantage of habituating men to kinds of effort—general labouring, or "ground work," stone-breaking or hand-grinding—of which there is already a large surplus on the market. There is nothing degrading or depressing in physical, mental, and technical training; there is in it, indeed, a strong element of stimulus and hope, because it will fit the men to take better situations than they could without it. On the other hand, it is not agreeable to the "average sensual man" to surrender himself continuously to an ordered round of continuous training of any sort under hygienic conditions, with every faculty kept alert by varied stimuli, so as to produce the highest state of physical and mental efficiency of which he is capable. In short, Maintenance under Training, whilst more "eligible" in every sense than starvation in idleness, is less agreeable than the ordinary industrial employment at wages, in one's own occupation, with freedom to spend or mis-spend one's wages and one's leisure as is desired. Thus, the individuals whom distress from Unemployment

throws upon our hands will, by this Maintenance under Training, be restored to full health and vigour and otherwise improved, instead of, as at present, being deteriorated. On the other hand we shall, as is essential, leave in full force, not only the incentive to take employment and to keep it, but also the incentive to insure against Unemployment by joining an existing Trade Union, or forming one if none actually exists.

In working out the details of this scheme of Maintenance under Training with men of practical experience in connection with the treatment of the Able-bodied and the Unemployed, we have come face to face with four difficulties which will be urged as objections.

It is clear that Maintenance under Training will involve a greater expenditure per head than maintenance without training. But the grant of mere maintenance—that is, unconditional Outdoor Relief—is plainly impossible; and experience shows that both Relief Works and Workhouses are, as a matter of fact, with all the necessary plant and administrative expenses, themselves extremely costly, as well as extremely demoralising. It may, however, be admitted that the State could hardly undertake to provide very elaborate forms of training for hundreds of thousands of men. There can be no successful treatment of the Able-bodied unless they are dealt with *individually*, man by man. We agree with General Booth when he declares that he placed “Individual Reformation in the front in all operations which have for their object the betterment of society. Any effort at social reform that does not provide facilities for the regeneration of the individual is, in my opinion, foredoomed to failure.” Under the proposals that we are making the numbers of the Unemployed will be greatly reduced; and the ultimate residuum that must be maintained ought not to be so numerous as to transcend our powers. And the training must be adapted to circumstances. When the numbers in any one place become large it may not be possible to afford much beyond the simpler forms of physical training and elementary instruction, which can be inexpensively provided for men in mass. The more

specialised treatment must necessarily be adapted to individuals, or small groups of similar individuals, which a National Authority could collect in particular establishments each with its own special variety of training.

- There is no reason why these should be more expensive per head than the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony. It is, indeed, inherent in any form of provision which aims at improving the quality of the material to be dealt with that some expense should be involved. The question is whether there is any alternative really cheaper to the nation.

It is objected that Maintenance under Training, although distasteful to the average workman, will be found attractive to some, at any rate, of the men; and that these will be constantly falling out of employment in order to resort to it. The Superintendent of every institution learns to recognise the docile man, with no vices and no initiative, who is inertly content with the day's routine, and who asks nothing better than to be allowed to go on for ever. Such men, at present, linger on indefinitely at Relief Works, or in the Labour Yard; and even in the Workhouse. It is, however, just one of the advantages of training, as it is of the skilled medical treatment of the sick in hospital, that it can be indefinitely adjusted so as to apply to each patient the exact stimulus required to call out his faculties. With what we may call the "industrial malingering" there will be other remedies. With the co-operation of the National Labour Exchange he can be given successive chances of employment; and, after a certain number of trials, his repeated return will be a cause for his judicial commitment to a Detention Colony.

- An entirely opposite objection is urged by others, namely, that Maintenance under Training will be so repellent to those in distress from Unemployment that they will put up with any hardship rather than submit to it. Many men are unconscious of personal defect, or shortcoming, or weakness of body or mind; and will be unable to understand why they should go into training. We all shrink instinctively from a searching medical examination;

and we should shrink still the more from a testing of all our faculties. But, as a matter of fact, the difficulty is an imaginary one. Whatever may be our objection to medical and other examinations, this is not found, in any grade of life, to stand in the way of applying for what we want, whether it be an appointment in the Army, Navy, or Civil Service, or admission to the police force or the railway service. No man in distress, or whose family is suffering distress, will let a medical examination stand between him and adequate provision. And the medical examination and testing of faculties convinces every man of his need of training, in one respect or another, whilst the training itself soon brings home to him that he is susceptible of improvement. Yet we need force no man to come in, nor detain any unwilling subject. He has always the alternative of trying to earn his own living outside. The National Labour Exchange will, at any time, do its best to help him to get a place. So long as he commits no crime, and neglects none of his social obligations; so long as he does not fail to get lodging, food, and clothing for himself and his family; so long as his children are not found lacking medical attendance when ill, or underfed at school; so long, indeed, as neither he nor his family ask or require any form of Public Assistance, he will be free to live as he likes. But directly any of these things happen, it will be a condition that the husband and the father, if certified as Able-bodied, shall be in attendance at the Training Establishment to which he is assigned. If he is recalcitrant, he will be judicially committed to a Detention Colony.

The final objection is that "the Unemployed" are not worth training; that they are in effect, Unemployable, and incapable of being improved. We do not think that any instructed person can seriously assert that there are not, among those in distress from Unemployment, many men—probably, at present, many thousands of men—who are in every way eligible and suitable for training of one sort or another. But if there are none such, the first step is to ascertain and certify the defectiveness of the persons in distress in order that they may be

segregated in appropriate institutions. We do nothing to test and discover which are really the Unemployable by offering tasks of work to half-starved crowds demoralised by periods of Unemployment. The men in distress present every possible variety; and the preliminary examination and testing of faculties, along with subsequent observation under training, will be always weeding out the definitely Unemployable. It will be the rule that no man is to be retained in any Training Establishment unless it is believed that he can be made fit, at some time or another, to resume his place in industrial employment. There will be room for experiment with different kinds of training, in different establishments, as well as in different opportunities of wage-earning. But there will inevitably be some hopeless cases. There will be men permanently incapacitated by physical defects, which cannot be cured, and which do not permit of their earning a living wage at any occupation whatsoever. Such men will, like those who fall ill during training, have to be remitted to the Local Health Authority, where they will be appropriately provided for as we have described (Part I. Ch. V. and VII.). There will be men found to be so mentally defective—whether epileptic, feeble-minded, or chronically inebriate—as to be incapable of continuing in wage-earning occupation. These will be handed over to the Local Authority for the Mentally Defective (Part I. Ch. VI.). There will be other men, adjudged capable in body and mind of earning a livelihood, but persistently neglecting or refusing to do so—whether as what we now know as Professional Vagrants, or as merely “work-shy” and recalcitrant to discipline. These men will remain on the hands of the National Authority dealing with the Able-bodied; but they will leave the free Training Establishments and be judicially committed to a Detention Training Colony.

What is essential to the success of these Training Establishments is, not only the power of exclusion of those found to be mentally or physically hopeless, but also the stimulus of Hope. Every man in the establishment, staff as well as patients, must be always conscious

that men enter with the prospect of improving their condition, and that, in fact, men are, after training, constantly passing out to better positions. It is therefore vital to these establishments to have the means of placing out the men whom they have found to be fit, or have made fit. This is one reason why the Training Establishments must be in the closest possible connection with the National Labour Exchange, and, therefore under the same authority. They will receive constant advices from the National Labour Exchange as to what kinds of training are most in demand. They will be constantly passing individuals back to the National Labour Exchange, at this point or that, when there is any prospect of places being found for them. And when there is any great accumulation of men in the Training Establishments, who are, or who have been rendered, fit for employment, but for whom employment, owing to the depression in trade, cannot be found, it will be a case for representation to the other Departments of the Government that the time has come for putting into operation the action already described for Regularising the National Demand for Labour.

There is, however, one special direction in the United Kingdom in which the Training Establishments will, we believe, constantly be able to place out some of their best men. Experience shows that a certain number of the best of the Unemployed—especially among our Class I.—have a desire for country life; and can be successfully established on Small Holdings. The Board of Agriculture should, we think, be able to afford opportunities—possibly in connection with its works of Land Reclamation—for these selected men to settle on the land.

Finally, there is emigration to other parts of the British Empire, where labour of various kinds is in greater demand than in these islands. For men who desire to try their fortunes in Canada or South Africa, Australia or New Zealand, residence at one or other of the Training Establishments will afford, not only useful training, but also a valuable opportunity for proving whether the would-be emigrant has such qualities and

capacities as warrant the belief that he can make a successful start in a new country.

There remains the Detention Colony, the existence of which, as a place to be avoided, is an indispensable element in any scheme of dealing with the Able-bodied. The Detention Colony, though it will be entered only upon commitment by a judicial authority, will not be a prison, or a convict settlement. It is essential, that the men committed to it should not be regarded as criminals. For this reason it should not be administered by the Prison Commissioners, or be under the Secretary of State for the Home Department. It should remain, in fact, as merely one among the Training Establishments, under the Minister dealing with the organisation of the National Labour Market. The Detention Colony will be, in fact, merely a Training Establishment of a peculiar kind, which has necessarily to have the characteristic of compulsory detention. Its inmates are sent there to be treated for, and if possible cured of, a morbid state of mind, which makes them incapable of filling a useful place in the industrial world. The general lines of the appropriate regimen have been laid down by various experimental colonies in Switzerland and Germany, Holland and Belgium; but there is much yet to be done to adapt them for this country, and to work them out in detail. Enforced regularity of life, and continuous work, of a stimulating and not monotonous kind; plain food, with opportunities of earning small luxuries by good conduct and output of work; restriction of personal liberty; and power to those in charge to allow return to one of the ordinary Training Establishments on probation, as soon as ever it is believed that reformation has been effected,—these features sufficiently indicate the outlines of the experiment. Repeated recalcitrance, and, of course, any assault on the persons in charge, would be criminal offences, leading to sentences of penal servitude in a convict settlement.

(E) *The Ministry of Labour*

It is, we think, clear that the whole of the elaborate organisation that we have outlined for dealing with the various sections of the necessitous and destitute Able-bodied and of the persons in distress from want of employment must be the work, not of Local Authorities, having jurisdiction only over limited areas, but of a Department of the National Government. Whether we consider the fifty to eighty thousand Vagrants perpetually drifting, at the expense, one way or another, of the rest of the community, from North to South and from South to North, or the large Stagnant Pools of Under-employed Labour which make up so much of waterside Boroughs such as West Ham, it is plain that the problem, by its very nature, transcends the powers of even the ablest Local Governing Body. The remedies are not within its scope. The network of Labour Exchanges must, it is obvious, be free to act, and to find situations for the Unemployed and to select men for employers, quite irrespective of their places of residence—or of business. The areas of the various Local Authorities, whether urban or rural, are usually very far from coincident with the geographical aggregations of manufactures and commerce. The Metropolitan area for business purposes already greatly transcends that of the Administrative County of London; and its Labour Market cannot be organised without including East Ham and West Ham, Walthamstow and Tottenham, Willesden and Ealing, Richmond and Croydon—not to speak of Chelmsford and Luton, Reading and Guildford, Erith and Tilbury. We could not possibly have independently governed Labour Exchanges for Manchester, Salford, Prestwich, Stockport, Hyde, and Oldham; or for Liverpool, Birkenhead, and Bootle; or for all the separate Counties and Boroughs that make up the busy and closely interlaced industrial districts of the Lower Clyde, Tyneside, the West Riding, and the Black Country respectively. The various local branches of the Labour Exchange must be free, it is clear, to fill situations and to place men where they can,

anywhere in the kingdom, without the clogging influences of local preferences for finding work for local men, or "keeping all our herrings for our own sea-maws." Moreover, it is essential that the Labour Exchange should work in the closest co-operation with the Associations of Employers and the Trade Unions; and these are organised without any regard for municipal or county boundaries, and are, indeed, to a great extent, national in scope. Any scheme of Government aid to Trade Union Insurance, dealing as it would with the great national trade societies, must clearly be national in its administration. Similarly, the Training Establishments, at which the ultimate residuum of Unemployed must be maintained whilst they are being tested and improved, are plainly beyond the capacity of the Local Authorities. Some kinds, like the Detention Colonies, will be few in number; possibly only one or two for each of the three kingdoms. Of the others, the more highly specialised, providing particular kinds of training, or dealing with men in particular states of body or mind, must, like specialised hospitals, draw their patients from all over the country. Moreover, all these institutions must be in close and easy communication with each other, so that men can be transferred without any question of finance, from one to the other, being freely passed from grade to grade, and from training to training, according to their condition and their need. They must always be, too, in intimate touch with all the branches of the National Labour Exchange, acting constantly in conformity with its Reports as to the state of the Labour Market and its changing needs. But beyond all considerations of administrative efficiency of the Labour Exchange, Trade Union Insurance, and the Training Establishments, it seems to us essential to success that we should link up these measures of provision with the measures of prevention that are no less required for the absorption of the surplus and the mitigation of the recurrent fluctuations of Trade. The legislative restriction of Boy Labour, and the legislative reduction of the hours of the railway and tramway servants need to be put into operation in concert

with the operations of the Labour Exchange. If there is to be any 'Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour, by means of a Ten Years' Programme of Government Works, to be started by the various Departments in the years of depression, it is clear that this action can safely be taken only on the advice of another Department of the Government. If the provision for the Unemployed were in the hands of the Local Authorities, each of them would be pressing the National Government to start the supplementary Government Works whenever its own local industry happened to be depressed, irrespective of the state of the Labour Market in the nation as a whole; and to start them, too, within its own area, for the convenience of its own Unemployed, irrespective of the national needs. The result would inevitably be that, in order to prevent the measure degenerating into the mere opening of local Relief Works, the Government would tend to disregard the representations altogether. For all these reasons, it is imperative, in spite of the difficulty of inducing the National Government to undertake an extensive new service, that the Local Authorities, whom we are already sufficiently burdening, should insist on being relieved, once and for all, of all duties relating to the Able-bodied and the Unemployed.

(i.) *The Minister for Labour*

We propose that, in order to ensure complete ministerial responsibility, and the full and continuous control of Parliament over so important a branch of industrial organisation, the whole work should be entrusted to a Minister for Labour, who would naturally be a member of the House of Commons and included in the Cabinet. His Department would embrace three entirely new administrative services, namely, the National Labour Exchange, the Trade Insurance Division, and the Maintenance and Training Division. To these three Divisions, we should be disposed to add, by transfer, three existing branches of other Government Departments; so that the Ministry of Labour would consist of six separate and distinct Divisions, each under its own Assistant Secretary. We should

transfer, in this way, to form a new Industrial Regulation Division, all the administration of the laws relating to hours, wages, and conditions of employment, including the Factories and Workshops Acts, the Shop Hours and Truck Acts, and the Mines Regulation Acts, from the Home Office; and the Regulation of Railways Act, 1893, from the Board of Trade. The Labour Department of the Board of Trade would form the nucleus of a new Statistical Division, and the Emigrants' Information Office under the Secretary of State for the Colonies the nucleus of a new Emigration and Immigration Division.

It has been suggested that the Minister for Labour should be the President of a Board including representatives of employers and employed. We are entirely opposed to any such arrangement, as calculated to interfere with the control of Parliament, and the complete responsibility of the Minister to the House of Commons. Unless the Minister, and the Minister alone, is placed in a position to decide what is to be done, it will be difficult for Parliament to ensure that its views upon policy will not be thwarted by influences over which it has no control; and impossible for the House of Commons to hold the Cabinet in general, and the Minister for Labour in particular, responsible for the results of his administration. The place of representatives of employers and employed is on Advisory Committees, which should be either constituted permanently or convened from time to time as required, to make suggestions, offer criticism, and supply information, in connection with particular subjects; or even generally with regard to such branches of the administration as the working of the National Labour Exchange, the arrangements for insurance or emigration, or the organisation of the institutions for training.

There would be many advantages in making the Department of the Minister for Labour responsible for the whole of the United Kingdom, as are the Treasury (with the Inland Revenue, Customs, and Post Office); the Board of Trade (with its Mercantile Marine Offices and its Labour Department); and the Home Office (for Prisons and Factory Acts). We think, however, on the whole,

that the work would probably be organised with less friction if separate Departments on similar lines were arranged for Scotland and Ireland respectively; under the responsibility of the Secretary for Scotland, and the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary for Ireland. We do not presume to suggest with what branches of the existing Scottish and Irish administration the new Department could be most conveniently associated.

(ii.) *The National Labour Exchange*

It would be the first task of the Minister for Labour to organise, in every populous centre, one or more branches of the National Labour Exchange, and to convert them, as contemplated by the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, into a network of intelligence as to the demand and supply of labour. These local offices would naturally vary in size and organisation. In London the Minister would find ready to hand, and would naturally take over, the system of Exchanges now administered by the Central (Unemployed) Body. In a few other towns the "Labour Bureau" or Employment Exchange run by the Municipality under the Unemployed Workmen Act is sufficiently distinct to be also taken over. But the National Labour Exchange must, from the outset, make it clear that it has nothing whatever to do with the relief of Distress from Unemployment, and must therefore carefully avoid connecting itself in the public mind with the registers of applicants to Distress Committees.

The Labour Exchange would, of course, not confine itself to filling situations in the ranks of casual employment, or from among those who had to be supported or assisted in one way or another. It would receive, and in every way encourage, voluntary applications from employers for labour of better grades, for durable situations; which it would do its best to fill from the best of those whom it had on its books, whether or not they were in distress, or even actually out of work. Its business, in short, is to find situations for all men who desire them, whether of not

they are actually Unemployed, and quite irrespective of their affluence or their distress; and to find men for all the vacancies notified by employers, entirely without reference to whether the successful candidates are married or single, in want or not. Indeed, in Germany a large proportion of the applicants are men who have not yet left their situations, or employers who expect to have vacancies. The object to be kept in view is that the Labour Exchange should be used by every one who needs its services, just as if it were a post office or a railway station. Hence, in all populous centres the Labour Exchanges should have premises in prominent positions, sufficiently large, to allow of capacious waiting-rooms, and different entrances and exits: and also suitable rooms for the meetings of Associations of Employers and Trade Unions, whom it is desirable to encourage to use the Exchange. Experience would show how far it was desirable to develop separate Labour Exchanges for particular industries, like that at present maintained by the Board of Trade for the Mercantile Marine, which should presumably be transferred to the new department. In any case there should be, in each town, a Local Advisory Committee of representatives of the employers and of the Trade Unions, which should supervise the working of the Exchange; and which could supply, not only useful criticisms and suggestions, but also valuable information without which the institution can never achieve its full measure of success.

There will remain, after the Labour Exchange has met all the demands upon it, a residuum of men, who are demonstrably not wanted at that moment, in that place. This "surplus labour" will be a varying amount from day to day. Some of it will be needed to meet the periods of increased demand for labour—the "wools" and the "teas" at the docks, the pressure on the railway companies at the holiday seasons, the extra postmen at Christmas, the "glut men" at the Custom House, the curiously regular irregularities of the printing and bookbinding trades, the increased demand in winter of the gas companies on the one hand and the theatrical industry on the other, the spring rush on painters and

builders, labourers, or dressmakers, and trouser-finishers, and so on. But we shall be surprised to find how easy it will prove, after a year or two's experience, to forecast these requirements *for the town as a whole*; and, as we have suggested, how comparatively small is the variation in the aggregate volume of employment for unskilled and casual labour of one day or of one month, or of one season of the year, compared with another. What remains to be discovered is how far the different sporadic demands can be satisfied interchangeably by the undifferentiated labour that is available. Complete interchangeability of labour, and complete "dovetailing" of situations may, of course, even in the realm of casual, unskilled labour not be possible. But probably it would become every year more practicable; and it will obviously be part of the training of the ultimate residuum of Unemployed to promote a more complete interchangeability; moreover, whilst it would be the policy of the Minister for Labour so to direct the operations of the National Labour Exchange as to bring about the "Decasualisation of Casual Labour," and the Suppression of Under-employment, and of the peculiar Discontinuity of Employment characteristic of the seasonal trades, this would have to be undertaken gradually and with caution. It could only proceed step by step with the arrangements for the Absorption of Labour that we have described, and with the organisation of Training Establishments at which maintenance under training was provided for any person who might find himself without employment.

When the whole of the anticipated requirements of each town are provided for—and, of course, at all times as regards individual cases—it should be the duty of the various Labour Exchanges to communicate with each other as to the actual or anticipated requirements of other towns. Just as all the Labour Exchanges in one town would report, day by day, and even, telephonically, hour by hour, to a central office in that town, from which they would all be advised as to the localities where additional men were required, so the Labour Exchanges of all the different towns would report, at least once a day, to the Ministry of Labour as regards England and Wales, and to

the corresponding Department as regards Scotland and Ireland, stating :—

(a) What surplus labour they had ; and

(b) How much of it was not needed for the proximate local requirements ; or, on the other hand,

(c) What shortage of Labour they had, or expected to have.

Particular Labour Exchanges could then be put telephonically in direct communication with each other, either with a view to filling particular situations or with a view to an offer, to those labourers who were disengaged, of the chance of migration to the town in which additional labour of any particular sort was required. It might well be part of the help afforded by the State to make this mobility possible by advancing any necessary railway fares, in the form of special non-transferable railway tickets, available only for the particular journey authorised.

(iii.) *The Trade Insurance Division*

The Trade Insurance Division would, in the main, deal with finance and accounts. As we have explained, we do not recommend any Government Insurance Fund to provide Out-of-Work Pay in competition with the Trade Unions. The Trade Insurance Division would prepare and administer the regulations under which the Government Subvention to the societies providing insurance against Unemployment was annually granted. It is not suggested that the Government should assume any responsibility for the management, or the financial soundness of the societies to which it paid its subvention. Nor would the Government give any undertaking as to the future ; or come into contact with any individual member. All that it would do, year by year, would be, in recognition of the fact that certain voluntary associations had, by their system of Trade Insurance, actually provided Out-of-Work Pay in the preceding year for so many men, at such and such a cost, and thereby greatly relieved the burden which the Unemployed cast upon the Government, to grant to

such societies amounts equal to some fixed proportion (not exceeding one-half) of the sums thus already disbursed. This would merely involve the making of an annual application by the Trade Union, supported by statistics from its duly audited accounts, stating the particulars of all its Out-of-Work Benefit for the preceding year. The Trade Insurance Division would, of course, be entitled to make any inspection of books, or other investigation necessary for satisfying itself that the application was, in all its details, in accordance with the regulations. But there would be no control over policy. The Trade Insurance Division would have no further power than to withhold payment of its subvention in respect of any cases in which it was not satisfied that the Out-of-Work Benefit had been granted only in relief of members unemployed through slackness of trade.

The relations of the Trade Insurance Division with the Executive Committees of the different trade societies would be facilitated by the fact that their connection would be entirely voluntary, and terminable at any time. There is no advantage in pressing, still less in compelling, a Trade Union to accept the subvention offered to it. It might be allowed, if it chose, to remain as at present, paying its own benefits for its own members exclusively from its own funds; or declining to take up Out-of-Work Benefit.

(iv.) *The Industrial Regulation Division*

We need now describe the function of this Division, of which the present Factory Department of the Home Office and the analogous department of the Board of Trade dealing with the hours of railway servants, would form the most substantial part. We imagine that this department will be presently reinforced by the organisation of Boards of employers and workmen to decide on the conditions of employment which should obtain in particular industries, and to get these embodied in new clauses of the Factory Act or voluntarily agreed to by employers and workpeople. Some such industrial organisation will become

more than ever desirable in order to guide the National Labour Exchange with regard to particular industries.

(v.) *The Emigration and Immigration Division*

This Division would develop the office now maintained under the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in close communication with the responsible Governments of other parts of the Empire. In particular it will be constantly transmitting information to the Maintenance and Training Division as to the qualities needed to make a man or woman fit to emigrate with a prospect of success. But we anticipate that this Division will not confine itself to overlooking the emigration of our citizens; it will also supervise and, if necessary, check the immigration of alien labour. When a National Labour Exchange has undertaken the responsibility of finding situations for unemployed citizens, and a Maintenance and Training Division has undertaken to provide for those for whom situations cannot be found, we do not think it likely that the community will acquiesce in any indiscriminate invasion by necessitous foreign wage-earners at times when the home market is overstocked. The principle of supervision has already been enacted by Parliament, and we recommend that the carrying out of this statute should be transferred to the Ministry of Labour. With regard to the emigration of individuals to other parts of the Empire, we think that the Division should consider the expediency of making use of the organisation of the various Colonial Governments and Voluntary Associations.

(vi.) *The Statistical Division*

The Statistical Division would work in close connection with the rest of the Department. It would summarise and collate all the information available with regard to the labour market, the temporary or permanent depressions in certain industries, the level of wages and hours, and the flow of labour in and out of the country. On this material it would be able to calculate the begin-

nings of, waves of depression or waves of inflation with more certainty, and, we hope, with more practical result than the Meteorological Department forecasts the weather. Upon these statistics the Minister of Labour would inform the Ministers responsible for the spending departments of the approaching scarcity or surplus of Labour in particular trades or in the country at large. These statistics would be also available to calculate insurance premiums, or to guide the Maintenance and Training Division in the determination of the kind of training required. Upon these statistics Boards of employers and workmen might determine, subject to any statutory regulations, the hours and wages of particular occupations. Finally, on these statistics would be determined how far it was desirable to encourage emigration out of the United Kingdom, or permit immigration into it.

(vii.) *The Maintenance and Training Division*

To this Division there falls the most difficult and perhaps the most important task, that of working out the *technique* of an entirely new departure, in which previous experience, whether under the Poor Law or under the Unemployed Workmen Act, offers but little beyond examples of what to avoid.

We see at once that there will have to be one or more spacious Receiving Offices in each considerable centre of population, to which able-bodied persons in distress from want of employment, or unable to get food or lodging, could apply for maintenance. Such persons would either apply spontaneously, or they might be referred or brought in by the police, or by the officers of the Local Health or Education Authorities. Their urgent wants would have to be met, as they have to be at present under the head of "Sudden or Urgent Necessity"; and they would then be medically examined, and their faculties tested, to see what could be done for them. The Receiving Office would promptly pass all its cases on to one Training Establishment or another; but it would plainly require to have a certain amount of cellular sleeping accommodation.

available for occupation by persons absolutely homeless, pending their removal. The officers of the Receiving House for the Able-bodied would naturally act in close concert with those of the Local Health Authority and Local Education Authority, all alike "searching out" destitution, and passing to one another the cases with which each was specially concerned—all destitute children, for instance, being instantly taken charge of by the Local Education Authority, and all sick persons in distress by the Local Health Authority.

We have explained, in the Scheme of Reform with which we concluded Part I. of this Report, how the various classes of the non-Able-bodied would be taken charge of by the several specialised statutory committees of the County or County Borough Councils—the children of school age by the Local Education Authority; the infants, the sick, the permanently incapacitated and the aged requiring institutional treatment by the Local Health Authority; the mentally defective of all kinds by the Local Authority for the Mentally Defective, and the aged in receipt of local or national pensions by the Local Pensions Authority. In order to avoid overlapping of assistance to different members of the same family, or to one and the same person by different Authorities or by private charity, as also to ensure that all necessary requirements are fulfilled, we have proposed that all forms of Public Assistance should be entered in a common Register for each County or County Borough; and that all proposals for the grant of Home Allowance by any Committee should be submitted for sanction to the local Registrar of Public Assistance. It is clear that the same course should be followed with all Public Assistance granted to the Able-bodied. The Superintendent of the Local Receiving House for the Able-bodied would, in fact, stand in the same relation to the Registrar of Public Assistance as the various Local Authorities for the several classes of the non-Able-bodied.

From the Receiving Office the Able-bodied person in distress would be assigned to one or other of the Training Establishments, according to the circumstances of his case. If he was a married man with a home, he would probably

be directed to attend next morning at 6 A.M., at the Day Training Depot of his town or district, where his whole day would be taken up with the training appropriate to his needs; with good plain meals on the dietary prescribed by the Trainer. But he would return home at night. Day Training Depots of this kind will be required on the outskirts of all large towns though they will not all necessarily be on the same model. If there were dependent children at home, the Superintendent of the Receiving Office would have to apply to the local Registrar of Public Assistance (giving simultaneous notice to the officers of the Local Education Authority and Local Health Authority) for sanction to have Home Aliment paid. This would be charged to the Local Education Authority; and if that Authority was not satisfied with the home circumstances of the children, it could elect to take them into one of its residential institutions, or admit them to its Day Industrial School.

But the unmarried or homeless man would probably find himself assigned to one or other of the residential Training Establishments in the country. These Farm Colonies would be established as and where required. They would adopt different kinds of training and different types of regimen, according to the needs of their respective classes of inmates. Hence the Superintendent of the Receiving House would have to decide where each applicant could most appropriately be sent. He would bear in mind also the state of the local labour market, and whether it was expected that there would be an early increase in the demand. He would consider also the peculiar needs of each man, and where he was most likely to be benefited.

We have to consider the case of women as well as of men: There must, it is clear, be a Women's Side of the Receiving Office, under a female officer. The able-bodied woman applicant would be dealt with exactly on the same lines as the man; being assigned, if single and without children, or if homeless, to a suitable day or residential Training Establishment for women only. The woman with dependent children, and with a home which satisfied the

minimum requirements of the Local Health Authority and Local Education Authority, would receive (unless she was adjudged unfit to have the charge of the children) Home Aliment for their support from the Local Education Authority, subject always, in order to prevent overlapping and infringement of economic conditions, to the sanction of the local Registrar of Public Assistance. Far from being provided with industrial employment, the mother with whom her children were thus "boarded out" by the Local Education Authority would be required to devote herself wholly to their care, on pain of having them withdrawn from her.

There remains the case of the Able-bodied wife, without dependent children, of the able-bodied man having a decent home, but yet in need of assistance. Usually the man would be assigned to the Day Training Depot, where he would have his food. For the wife, the Superintendent of the Receiving House would inquire from the Labour Exchange whether employment of suitable nature could be found, which would permit her to keep up the home. If not, he would apply to the local Registrar of Public Assistance for sanction for the grant of Home Aliment, out of national funds, to the woman herself. This should be made conditional on her taking such steps for her own self-improvement as the Local Women's Advisory Committee might suggest; including, probably, daily attendance at the nearest Domestic Economy School for further training in cookery, dressmaking, and housekeeping.

The Maintenance and Training Division would, it is clear, be able to make great use, at each stage of its work, of voluntary helpers and voluntary institutions. It would have its Local Women's Advisory Committees, and its volunteer visitors, who would look after the wives, and help with the women inmates of the Women's Training Establishments. In the establishment and management of these institutions, the Government might receive, too, a practically unlimited amount of voluntary help and co-operation. In this connection there would be a great opportunity for making use of the fervour and zeal of philanthropy and religion. The greatest results in the way

of the reclamation and training of individuals have always been achieved by religious organisations. It would be wise for the State to make a greatly increased use (with proper inspection) of farm colonies and similar settlements and homes, conducted by religious and philanthropic committees, for such of the residuum as may be willing to be sent to them in preference to the Government establishments. It may well be that for all that important side of training that is implied in the strengthening of moral character, the building up of the will, the power to resist temptation, and the formation of regular habits, the most effective instruments are a degree of love and of religious faith that a Government establishment with a Civil Service staff may not always be able to secure. The Ministry of Labour would therefore be well advised to let the denominations and the philanthropists have all the scope that they can take, and only to establish such additional Government farm colonies as are found needful to supplement the private effort. This private effort could be subsidised by payments for each case, as has long been done for a whole generation in the reformatory schools, and is now being done in inebriate homes.

(F) "*Utopian?*"

This elaborate scheme of national organisation for dealing with the grave social evil of Unemployment, with its resultant Able-bodied Destitution, and its deterioration of hundreds of thousands of working-class families, will seem to many persons Utopian. Experience proves, however, that this may mean no more than that it will take a little time to accustom people to the proposals, and to get them carried into operation. The first step is to make the whole community realise that the evil exists. At present, it is not too much to say that the average citizen of the middle or upper class takes for granted the constantly recurring destitution among wage-earning families due to Unemployment, as part of the natural order of things, and as no more to be combated than the east wind. In the

same way the eighteenth-century citizen acquiesced in the horrors of the contemporary prison administration, and in the slave trade; just as, for the first decades of the nineteenth century, our grandfathers accepted as inevitable the slavery of the little children of the wage-earners in mines and factories, and the incessant devastation of the slums by "fever." Fifty years hence we shall be looking back with amazement at the helpless and ignorant acquiescence of the governing classes of the United Kingdom, at the opening of the twentieth century, in the constant debasement of character and *physique*, not to mention the perpetual draining away of the nation's wealth, that idleness combined with starvation plainly causes.

The second step is for the Government to make a serious endeavour to grapple with the evil as a whole, on a deliberately thought-out plan. By the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, Parliament and the nation have admitted the public responsibility in the matter. We may agree that the work of the Distress Committees has resulted in little. But the experiments of the last few years have definitely revealed the nature of the problem, and the lines on which it can be dealt with. *We have to report that, in our judgment, it is now administratively possible, if it is sincerely wished to do so, to remedy most of the evils of Unemployment; to the same extent, at least, as we have in the past century diminished the death-rate from fever and lessened the industrial slavery of young children.* It is not a valid objection that a demonstrably perfect and popularly-accepted *technique*, either with regard to the prevention of Unemployment, or with regard to the treatment of the Unemployed, has not yet been worked out. No such *technique* can ever be more than foreshadowed until it is actually being put in operation. Less than a century ago the problem of dealing with the sewage of London seemed insoluble. Half a million separate private cesspools accumulated each its own putrefaction. To combine these festering heaps into a single main drainage system seemed, to the Statesmen and social reformers of 1820 or 1830, beyond the bounds of possibility. We now take for granted that only by

such a concentration is it possible to get rid of the festering heaps, and scientifically treat the ultimate residuum. In the same way, a century ago, no one knew how to administer a fever hospital; the eighteenth century “pest-house” must, indeed, have killed more people than it cured. Yet it was only by establishing hospitals that we learnt how to make them instruments of recovery for the patients and of a beneficent protection to the rest of the community. And, to take a more recent problem, less than half a century ago, when millions of children in the land were growing up untaught, undisciplined, and uncared for, it would have sounded wildly visionary to have suggested that the remedy was elaborate organisation on a carefully thought-out plan. Could there have been anything more “Utopian” in 1860 than a picture of what to-day we take as a matter of course, the 7,000,000 children emerging every morning, washed and brushed, from 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 homes, in every part of the Kingdom, traversing street and road and lonely woodland, going o’er fell and moor, to present themselves at a given hour at their 30,000 schools, where each of the 7,000,000 finds his or her own individual place, with books and blackboard and teacher provided? What has been effected in the organisation of Public Health and Public Education can be effected, if we wish it, in the Public Organisation of the Labour Market.

(a) *Summary of Proposals*

We therefore recommend:—

1. That the duty of so organising the National Labour Market as to prevent or to minimise Unemployment should be placed upon a Minister responsible to Parliament, who might be designated the Minister for Labour.

2. That the Ministry of Labour should include six distinct and separately organised Divisions, each with its own Assistant Secretary; namely, the National Labour Exchange, the Trade Insurance Division, the Maintenance and Training Division, the Industrial Regulation Division.

the Emigration and Immigration Division, and the Statistical Division.

3. That the function of the National Labour Exchange should be, not only (a) to ascertain and report the surplus or shortage of labour of particular kinds, at particular places; and (b) to diminish the time and energy now spent in looking for work, and the consequent "leakage" between jobs; but also (c) so to "dovetail" casual and seasonal employments as to arrange for practical continuity of work for those now chronically Under-employed. That whilst resort to the National Labour Exchange might be optional for employers filling situations of at least a month's duration, it should (following the precedent of the Labour Exchange for seamen already conducted by the Board of Trade in the Mercantile Marine Offices) be made legally compulsory in certain scheduled trades in which excessive Discontinuity of Employment prevails; and especially for the engagement of Casual Labour.

4. That in our opinion no effective steps can be taken towards the "Decasualisation of Casual Labour," and the Suppression of Under-employment, without simultaneously taking action to ensure the immediate absorption, or else to provide the full and honourable maintenance at the public expense, of the surplus of labourers that will thereby stand revealed.

5. That, in order to secure proper industrial training for the youth of the nation, an amendment of the Factory Acts is urgently required to provide that no child should be employed at all below the age of fifteen; that no young person under eighteen should be employed for more than thirty hours per week; and that all young persons so employed should be required to attend for thirty hours per week at suitable Trade Schools to be maintained by the Local Education Authorities.

6. That the terms of the Regulation of Railways Act, 1893, should be so amended as to enable the Minister of Labour to require the prompt reduction of the hours of duty of railway, tramway, and omnibus workers, if not to forty-eight, at any rate, to not more than sixty in any one week as a maximum.

7. That all mothers having the charge of young children, and in receipt, by themselves or their husbands, of any form of Public Assistance, should receive enough for the full maintenance of the family; and that it should then be made a condition of such assistance that the mother should devote herself to the care of her children; without seeking industrial employment.

8. That we recommend these reforms for their own sake, but it is an additional advantage that they (and especially the Halving of Boy Labour) would permit the immediate addition to the number of men in employment equal to a large proportion of those who are now Unemployed or Under-employed.

9. That in order to meet the periodically recurrent general depressions of Trade, the Government should take advantage of there being at these periods as much Unemployment of capital as there is Unemployment of labour; that it should definitely undertake, as far as practicable, the Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour; and that it should, for this purpose, and to the extent of at least £4,000,000 a year, arrange a portion of the ordinary work required by each Department on a Ten Years' Programme; such £40,000,000 worth of work for the decade being then put in hand, not by equal annual instalments, but exclusively in the lean years of the trade cycle; being paid for out of loans for short terms raised as they are required, and being executed with the best available labour, at Standard Rates, *engaged in the ordinary way.*

10. That in this Ten Years' Programme there should be included works of Afforestation, Coast Protection, and Land Reclamation; to be carried out by the Board of Agriculture exclusively in the lean years of the trade cycle; *by the most suitable labour obtainable taken on in the ordinary way,* at the rates locally current for the work, and paid for out of loans raised as required.

11. That the statistical and other evidence indicates that, by such measures as the above, the greater part of the fluctuations in the aggregate volume of employment can be obviated; and the bulk of the surplus labour

manifesting itself in chronic Under-employment 'can' be immediately absorbed, leaving, at all times, only a relatively small residuum of men who are, for various reasons, in distress from want of work.

12. That with a lessened Discontinuity of Employment, and the Suppression of Under-employment, the provision of Out-of-Work Benefit by Trade Unions would become practicable over a much greater range of industry than at present; and its extension should, as the best form of insurance against Unemployment, receive Government encouragement and support. That in view of its probable adverse effect on Trade Union membership and organisation, we are unable to recommend the establishment of any plan of Government or compulsory Insurance against Unemployment. That we recommend, however, that, following the precedents set in several foreign countries, a Government subvention not exceeding one-half of the sum actually paid in the last preceding year as Out-of-Work Benefit should be offered to Trade Unions or other societies providing such Benefit, in order to enable the necessary weekly contributions to be brought within the means of a larger proportion of the wage-earners.

13. That for the ultimate residuum of men in distress from want of employment, who may be expected to remain, after the measures now recommended have been put in operation, we recommend that Maintenance should be freely provided, without disfranchisement, on condition that they submit themselves to the physical and mental training that they may prove to require. That it should be the function of the Maintenance and Training Division of the Ministry of Labour to establish and maintain Receiving Offices in the various centres of population, at which able-bodied men in distress could apply for assistance, and at which they would be medically examined and have their faculties tested in order to discover in what way they could be improved by training. They would then be assigned either to suitable Day Training Depots or residential Farm Colonies, where their whole working time would be absorbed in such varied beneficial training of body and mind as they proved capable of; their wives

and families being, meanwhile, provided with adequate Home Aliment.

14. That no applicant for employment or man out of work need be legally required to register at the National Labour Exchange, or to attend or remain in any Training Establishment, so long as he abstained from crime (including Vagrancy and Mendicity), and maintained himself and his family without receiving or needing Public Assistance in any form; but that such registration, and, if required, such attendance, should be legally enforced on all men who fail to fulfil any of their social obligations, or are found houseless, or requiring Public Assistance for themselves or their families.

15. That the Maintenance and Training Division should also establish one or more Detention Colonies, of a reformatory type, to which men would be committed by the Magistrates, and compulsorily detained and kept to work under discipline, upon conviction of any such offences as Vagrancy, Mendicity, neglect to maintain family or to apply for Public Assistance for their maintenance if destitute, repeated recalcitrancy or breach of discipline in a Training Establishment, etc.

16. That for able-bodied women, without husband or dependent children, who may be found in distress from want of employment, there should be exactly the same sort of provision as for men. That for widows or other mothers in distress, having the care of young children, residing in homes not below the National Minimum of sanitation, and being themselves not adjudged unworthy to have children entrusted to them, there should be granted adequate Home Aliment on condition of their devoting their whole time and energy to the care of the children. That for the childless wives of able-bodied men in attendance at a Training Establishment, adequate Home Aliment be granted, conditional on their devoting their time to such further training in Domestic Economy as may be prescribed for them.

17. That upon the establishment of the Ministry of Labour, and the setting to work of its new organisation the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 should cease to

apply; and the Local Authorities should be relieved of all responsibilities with regard to the Able-bodied and the Unemployed.

18. That upon the necessary legislation being passed, a small Executive Commission be empowered to effect the necessary transfer to the Ministry of Labour of the functions with regard to the Able-bodied and the Unemployed at present performed by the Poor Law Authorities and the Distress Committees under the Unemployed Workmen Act; and to make, as from the Appointed Day, all necessary transfers and adjustments of buildings and officers, Farm Colonies and Labour Exchanges, assets and liabilities.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT instead of the National Uniformity of policy in dealing with the Able-bodied, upon which the Report of 1834 laid so much stress, we find at the present time, among the different Destitution Authorities of England and Wales, five different methods of treatment being simultaneously applied.

2. That two of these methods—that of maintenance in a General Mixed Workhouse, and that of unconditional and inadequate Outdoor Relief—in spite of almost universal condemnation from 1834 down to the present day, a condemnation in which we concur, are still extensively persisted in; with the effect of perpetually increasing the area and the demoralisation of Able-bodied Pauperism.

3. That we have been surprised to discover that the number of Able-bodied men in health who, in England and Wales, in the course of each year, receive temporary Outdoor Relief, *without even any task of work*, is very large—numbering apparently between 30,000 or 40,000; some of this relief being given on account of “sudden or urgent necessity,” but most of it being given as exceptions to the Orders and merely reported week by week to the Local Government Board for its approval.

4. That the number of *Able-bodied men in health* now in the General Mixed Workhouses of England, Wales, and Ireland is large—probably considerably in excess of 10,000—and that there are ominous signs that, in the large towns, the number of stardy Able-bodied men subjected to these demoralising conditions is steadily increasing.

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5. That we have definitely ascertained that—contrary to the common opinion, and even in violation of the law—the huge Poorhouses of the populous towns of Scotland also contain large, and apparently increasing, numbers of Able-bodied men in health, of exactly the same type as the inmates of the General Mixed Workhouses of England, Wales, and Ireland.

6. That the three specialised Poor Law methods of dealing with the Able-bodied—the Outdoor Labour Test, the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, and the Casual Ward—all, in our opinion, fail to provide treatment appropriate to any section of the Able-bodied, and are inherently incapable of being made to do so. If these institutions are lax (as is usually the case), they become the resort of wastrels and “cadgers,” of the “work-shy” and the dissolute, to whom their demoralising slackness and promiscuity is positively an attraction. To plunge a respectable able-bodied man or woman, in the crisis of utter destitution, into the midst of such persons is, at once, a torture and an almost inevitable degradation. If, on the other hand, the Outdoor Labour Test, the Able-bodied Test Workhouse, and the Casual Ward are made strict in their discipline and prison-like in their regimen, they are shunned by the vagabond and worthless class of “the occasional poor,” who thereupon contrive, to the great annoyance, cost, and danger of the public, to exist outside them. Their penal severity then falls only on such comparatively decent men as have become too debilitated and too incompetent to gain even the barest living outside; and these, though finding the regimen unendurable, are driven in again and again by sheer starvation. To subject such men to a brutalising regimen and penal severities is useless and inhuman; and it ought to be (if it is not already) contrary to law.

7. That by its provision of mere subsistence, available just when demanded, the Poor Law treatment of the Able-bodied, by any of the five methods at present in use, actually facilitates parasitic methods of existence, intermittent and irregular effort, and casual employment. In our opinion, this evil influence of the Destitution

Authorities in the Metropolis and all the great ports—to some extent, indeed, in all the towns—is to-day spreading demoralisation and manufacturing pauperism on a large scale.

8. That it appears to us open to grave objection that the Destitution Authorities should have been allowed to exercise powers of compulsory detention and of penal discipline, such as those now enforced in the Able-bodied Test Workhouse and the Casual Ward. For the exercise of such powers, we do not think that either the members of a Board of Guardians or its officers, without legal training, without any prescribed procedure, without appeal and without even a hearing of the person accused, are at all fitted. Nor do we consider that a Destitution Authority, or any staff that it is likely to engage, has the requisite knowledge or the requisite experience to enable it properly to administer penal discipline to those who might, in due form, have been sentenced to submit to it. The very use of compulsory detention and penal discipline by a Destitution Authority tends to defeat itself, as those for whom the rigorous measures were intended will, however destitute, certainly avoid applying for admission. On all these grounds, we must unreservedly condemn the proposal that extended powers of compulsory detention of adult Able-bodied persons should be granted to any Poor Law Authority, however constituted. Any such proposal would, in our opinion, arouse the strongest resentment, and would meet with determined opposition in the House of Commons.

9. That any attempt, by an repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, to force back into the Poor Law those sections of the Able-bodied who are now relieved by the Distress Committees, would be socially disastrous and politically impracticable. On the contrary, it is, in our judgment, of the highest importance to complete without delay the process begun under that Act, and to remove the remaining sections of the Able-bodied, once for all, from any connection with the Local Authorities dealing with the Children, the Sick, the Mentally Defective, and the Aged and Infirm. It is, in our opinion, essential that

whatever provision the community may decide to make for Able-bodied persons in distress should be administered by an Authority having to deal with all the Able-bodied and with the Able-bodied alone, and dealing with them, not merely at the crisis of destitution, but in relation to the cause and character of their distress, and the means to be taken for its cure. For all sections of the Able-bodied, the Poor Law, alike in England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, is, in our judgment, intellectually bankrupt.

10. That, apart from other considerations, the maintenance of a penal Poor Law for the Able-bodied has, in the large towns, been rendered impossible by the development of extensive Voluntary Agencies which refuse to allow the destitute to starve, or the homeless to remain at night without shelter.

11. That so long as the public organisation for dealing with the Able-bodied in distress is so directed as to result in large numbers of persons remaining in want of the actual necessities of life, on whatever excuse, it is neither practicable nor desirable to prevent Voluntary Agencies from relieving such persons.

12. That the relief thus given by means of shelters and the distribution of food—whilst it can hardly be made the subject of blame or reproach so long as people are starving and homeless—is almost wholly useless for permanently benefiting the persons relieved; and has, moreover, many objectionable characteristics.

13. That whilst some of the Labour Homes and Rural Colonies present good features, and attain a certain measure of success, they are, in the absence of any Detention Colony for the "work-shy," and of any adequate outlet for those who have been regenerated, unable to deal with more than a tiny fraction of the problem.

14. That the co-existence, in the great centres of population, of a penal Poor Law for the Able-bodied, with extensive, indiscriminate, unconditional and inadequate relief by Voluntary Agencies, produces so much undeserved suffering on the one hand, and so much degradation of character and general demoralisation on the other, as to

make it urgently necessary for the whole problem of Able-bodied Destitution to be systematically dealt with by the National Government.

15. That as compared with the methods of relieving the Unemployed under the Poor Law, the experience of the policy—inaugurated by Mr. Chamberlain's Circular of 1886; and definitely confirmed by the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905—of withdrawing the Unemployed from the Poor Law, has proved full of valuable suggestions and promise.

16. That the precedent of the Lancashire Cotton Famine suggests that Public Works, carried on under specialised organisation for a limited period, with the object of employing particular classes of persons deprived of definite situations by some accidental or temporary cessation of their regular employment, and practically certain to resume their ordinary occupations, may prove the easiest method of relieving their transient destitution.

17. That twenty years' experience has proved that it is not practicable in ordinary times to disentangle these cases from those of respectable men who are chronically Unemployed or Under-employed; with the result that any work at wages afforded by Local Authorities as a method of providing for the Unemployed tends to become chronic, and instead of being confined to the men thrown out of definite situations by the accidental and temporary dislocation of industry, it is, in practice, participated in by those who are chronically Unemployed or Under-employed, to an even greater extent than by those for whom it was intended.

18. That whilst the Unemployed Workmen Act has enabled a certain number of respectable workmen to tide over temporary distress without recourse to the Poor Law, it has demonstrated that, as a method for providing for chronic Unemployment or Under-employment, the provision of work at wages by Local Authorities affords no remedy and tends even to intensify the evil.

19. That the work at wages provided by Local Authorities is, in practice, either diverted from the ordinary employees of the Local Authorities, or else

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abstracted from what would otherwise have gone to the regular employees of contractors for public works; with the result, in either case, of creating, sooner or later, as much Unemployment as it relieves, and of thus throwing the cost of relieving the distress upon other wage-earners.

20. That work at wages, given to the Unemployed by Local Authorities for a few days or a few weeks at a time, tends, like the opening of a Labour Yard by the Board of Guardians, actually to promote the disastrous Under-employment characteristic of some industries, and positively encourages employers and employed to acquiesce in intermittent employment and casual jobs, instead of regular work at definite weekly wages.

21. That the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, whilst not excluding temporary Relief Works, contemplated and provided also for other experiments in providing for the Unemployed, which have unfortunately not been adequately put into operation by the Local Government Boards for England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland respectively or by the Local Authorities.

22. That one of the most promising of these experiments—the provision of Rural Colonies where the Unemployed could be trained with a view to their permanent re-establishment as self-supporting citizens, whether on the land or otherwise, in England or elsewhere—has been tried at the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony, with a considerable measure of success. Unfortunately, as it seems to us, the Local Government Board for England and Wales now insists on regarding this Farm Colony only as a means of affording temporary *relief* and not as a means of training men for future self-support; and refuses to permit any further expenditure for the purpose of permanently establishing even those men who have been selected and trained.

23. That another valuable provision of the Unemployed Workmen Act was that requiring the establishment, quite apart from the existence of distress from Unemployment, of a complete network of Labour Exchanges, covering the whole of the United Kingdom. Wherever a Distress Committee was not established the Act expressly required

the Council of every County and County Borough to appoint a Special Committee to investigate the conditions of the labour market by means of Labour Exchanges, and to establish or assist such Exchanges within its area. Such a network of Labour Exchanges, covering the whole Kingdom, would have afforded, as the experience of the Metropolitan Exchanges now demonstrates, valuable information both to Unemployed workmen and to Local Authorities dealing with the problem. Unfortunately, this provision of the Act, though as regards England and Wales, mandatory in its terms, appears to have been ignored by the Local Government Boards of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and has accordingly, with the exception of London and three places in Scotland, not been put in operation.

24. That in consequence of this failure to establish the complete network of Labour Exchanges contemplated by the Unemployed Workmen Act, Local Authorities have been greatly hampered in their attempts to put into operation the other provisions of the Act. Thus, the Holesley Bay Farm Colony has remained isolated; and great difficulties have been experienced in discovering suitable situations in other parts of England for the men there trained for agricultural pursuits. Moreover, the provision enabling Local Authorities to pay the expenses of removing men to places where situations had been found for them, has, in the lack of machinery for discovering such situations within the United Kingdom, been almost exclusively used for the purpose of conveying them to Canada.

25. That notwithstanding this failure to put the Unemployed Workmen Act in operation in the way that was intended, and the manifold shortcomings of the Act itself, we are of opinion that (as compared with the alternative of throwing the Unemployed back into the Poor Law) it has proved of considerable value; and that it should certainly be continued in force until a more adequate scheme of dealing with the grave social problem of Unemployment, otherwise than under the Poor Law, has been placed upon the Statute Book.

26. That distress from want of employment, though periodically aggravated by depression of trade, is a constant feature of industry and commerce as at present administered; and that the mass of men, women, and children suffering from the privation due to this Unemployment in the United Kingdom amounts, at the best of times, to hundreds of thousands, whilst in years of trade depression they must exceed a million in number.

27. That this misery has no redeeming feature. It does not, like the temporary hardships of work or adventure, produce in those capable of responding to the stimulus, greater strength, energy, endurance, fortitude or initiative. On the contrary, the enforced idleness and prolonged privation characteristic of Unemployment have, on both the strong man and the weak, on the man of character and conduct and on the dissolute, a gravely deteriorating effect on body and mind, on muscle and will. The magnitude of the loss thus caused to the nation first in the millions of days of enforced idleness of productive labourers, and secondly in the degradation and deterioration of character and physique—whether or not it is increasing—can scarcely be exaggerated.

28. That men in distress from want of employment approximate to one or other of four distinct types, requiring, as we have described, distinct treatment; namely, the Men from Permanent Situations, the Men of Discontinuous Employment, the Under-employed, and the Unemployable.

29. That what is needed for the Men from Permanent Situations is some prompt and gratuitous machinery for discovering what openings exist, anywhere in the United Kingdom, for their particular kind of service; or for ascertaining with certainty that no such openings exist; with suitable provision, where individual saving does not suffice, for the maintenance of themselves and their households whilst awaiting re-employment. Both the machinery and the provision are at present afforded, in some industries, by Trade Union "Vacant Books" and Trade Union Insurance. This, however, does not meet the need of the large numbers of men in occupations for

which no Trade Union exists, or in which no machinery for reporting vacancies and no insurance against Unemployment have been organised. Nor does it meet the cases, unhappily, always occurring in one industry or another, of men whose occupation is being taken from them by the adoption of new processes or new machinery, without any effective opportunity being afforded to them of training themselves to new means of livelihood.

30. That for the Men of Discontinuous Employment the same prompt and gratuitous machinery for discovering what openings exist, anywhere in the United Kingdom, is required, not only for individuals exceptionally Unemployed, but for the entire class, at all times; in order to prevent the constant "leakage" of time between job and job, and to obviate the demoralising aimless search for work, whether over any one great urban aggregation, or by means of wandering from town to town. The same machinery becomes imperative, in times of bad trade, in order to ascertain with certainty that no opportunity of employment exists. Without some such machinery, experience shows that Insurance against Unemployment breaks down, owing to the excessive amount of "time lost" between jobs, and the impossibility of securing that every claimant has done his best to get work.

31. That of all the forms of Unemployment, that which we have termed Under-employment, extending, as it does, to many hundreds of thousands of workers, and to their whole lives, is by far the worst in its evil effects; and that it is this system of chronic Under-employment which is above all other causes responsible for the perpetual manufacture of paupers that is going on; and which makes the task of the Distress Committees in dealing with the Unemployed of other types—such as the Men from Permanent Situations, or the Men of Discontinuous Employment—hopelessly impracticable.

32. That we have been unable to escape from the conclusion that, owing to various causes, there has accumulated, in all the ports, and indeed in all the large towns of the United Kingdom, an actual surplus of workmen; being more than are required to do the work in

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claiming to be in distress from want of employment. That accordingly, in our judgment, no successful dealing with the problem is possible unless provision is simultaneously made in ways suited to their several needs and deserts for all the various sections of the Unemployed by one and the same Authority.

36. That the duty of so organising the National Labour Market as to prevent or to minimise Unemployment should be placed upon a Minister responsible to Parliament, who might be designated the Minister for Labour.

37. That the Ministry of Labour should include six distinct and separately organised Divisions, each with its own Assistant Secretary; namely, the National Labour Exchange, the Trade Insurance Division, the Maintenance and Training Division, the Industrial Regulation Division, the Emigration and Immigration Division, and the Statistical Division.

38. That the function of the National Labour Exchange should be, not only (a) to ascertain and report the surplus or shortage of labour of particular kinds, at particular places; and (b) to diminish the time and energy now spent in looking for work, and the consequent "leakage" between jobs; but also (c) so to "dovetail" casual and seasonable employments as to arrange for practical continuity of work for those now chronically Under-employed. That whilst resort to the National Labour Exchange might be optional for employers filling situations of at least a month's duration, it should be (following the precedent of the Labour Exchange for seamen already conducted by the Board of Trade in the Mercantile Marine Offices) made legally compulsory in certain scheduled trades in which excessive Discontinuity of Employment prevails; and especially for the engagement of Casual Labour.

39. That in our opinion no effective steps can be taken towards the "Decasualisation of Casual Labour," and the Suppression of Under-employment, without simultaneously taking action to ensure the immediate absorption, or else to provide the full and honourable maintenance at the

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public expense, of the surplus of labourers that will thereby stand revealed.

40. That, in order to secure proper industrial training for the youth of the nation, an amendment of the Factory Acts is urgently required to provide that no child should be employed at all below the age of fifteen; that no young person under eighteen should be employed for more than thirty hours per week; and that all young persons so employed should be required to attend for thirty hours per week at suitable Trade Schools to be maintained by the Local Education Authorities.

41. That the terms of the Regulation of Railways Act, 1893, should be so amended as to enable the Minister of Labour to require the prompt reduction of the hours of duty of railway, tramway and omnibus workers, if not to forty-eight, at any rate to not more than sixty in any one week, a maximum.

42. That all mothers having the charge of young children, and in receipt, by themselves or their husbands, of any form of Public Assistance, should receive enough for the full maintenance of the family; and that it should then be made a condition of such assistance that the mother should devote herself to the care of her children; without seeking industrial employment.

43. That we recommend these reforms for their own sake, but it is an additional advantage that they (and especially the Halving of Boy Labour) would permit the immediate additional employment of men equal to a large proportion of Unemployed and Under-employed men.

44. That in order to meet the periodically recurrent general depressions of Trade, the Government should take advantage of there being at these periods as much Unemployment of capital as there is Unemployment of labour; that it should definitely undertake, as far as practicable, the Regularisation of the National Demand for Labour; and that it should, for this purpose, and to the extent of at least £4,000,000 a year, arrange a portion of the ordinary work required by each Department on a Ten Years' Programme; such £40,000,000 of work for the decade being then put in hand, not by equal annual

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instalments, but exclusively in the lean years of the trade cycle; being paid for out of loans for short terms raised as they are required, and being executed with the best available labour, at Standard Rates, *engaged in the ordinary way.*

45. That in this Ten Years Programme there should be included works of Afforestation, Coast Protection, and Land Reclamation, to be carried out by the Board of Agriculture exclusively in the lean years of the trade cycle; *by the most suitable labour obtainable, taken on in the ordinary way,* at the rates locally current for the work, and paid for out of loans raised as required.

46. That the statistical and other evidence indicates that, by such measures as the above, the greater part of the fluctuations in the aggregate volume of employment can be obviated; and the bulk of the surplus labour manifesting itself in chronic Under-employment can be immediately absorbed; leaving, at all times, only a relatively small residuum of men who are, for various reasons, in distress from want of work.

47. That with a lessened Discontinuity of Employment, and the Suppression of Under-employment, the provision of Out-of-Work Benefit by Trade Unions would become practicable over a much greater range of industry than at present; and its extension should, as the best form of insurance against Unemployment, receive Government encouragement and support. That in view of its probable adverse effect of Trade Union membership and organisation, we are unable to recommend the establishment of any plan of Government or compulsory Insurance against Unemployment. That we recommend, however, that, following the precedents set in several foreign countries, a Government subvention not exceeding one-half of the sum actually paid in the last preceding year as Out-of-Work Benefit should be offered to Trade Unions or other societies providing such Benefit, in order to enable the necessary weekly contributions to be brought within the means of a larger proportion of the wage-earners.

48. That for the ultimate residuum of men in distress from want of employment, who may be expected to remain,

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after the measures now recommended have been put in operation, we recommend that Maintenance should be freely provided, without disfranchisement, on condition that they submit themselves to the physical and mental training that they may prove to require. That it should be the function of the Maintenance and Training Division of the Ministry of Labour to establish and maintain Receiving Officers in the various centres of population, at which able-bodied men in distress could apply for assistance, and at which they would be medically examined and have their faculties tested in order to discover in what way they could be improved by training. They would then be assigned either to suitable Day Training Depots or residential Farm Colonies, where their whole working time would be absorbed in such varied beneficial training of body and mind as they proved capable of; their wives and families being, meanwhile, provided with adequate Home Allowance.

49. That no applicant for employment or man out of work, need be legally required to register at the National Labour Exchange, or to attend or remain in any Training Establishment, so long as he abstained from crime (including Vagrancy and Mendicity), and maintained himself and his family without receiving or needing Public Assistance in any form; but that such registration, and, if required, such attendance, should be legally enforced on all men who fail to fulfil any of their social obligations, or are found houseless, or requiring Public Assistance for themselves or their families.

50. That the Maintenance and Training Division should also establish one or more Detention Colonies, of a reformatory type, to which men would be committed by the Magistrates, and compulsorily detained and kept to work under discipline, upon conviction of any such offences as Vagrancy, Mendicity, neglect to maintain family or to apply for Public Assistance for their maintenance if destitute, repeated recalcitrancy, or breach of discipline in a Training Establishment, etc.

51. That, for able-bodied women, without husband or dependent children, who may be found in distress from

want of employment, there should be exactly the same sort of provision as for men. That for widows or other mothers in distress, having the care of young children, residing in homes not below the National Minimum of sanitation, and being themselves not adjudged unworthy to have children entrusted to them, there should be adequate Home Allowance on condition of their devoting their whole time and energy to the care of the children. That for the childless wives of able-bodied men in attendance at a Training Establishment, adequate Home Allowance be granted, conditional on their devoting their time to such further training in Domestic Economy as may be prescribed for them.

52. That upon the establishment of the Ministry of Labour and the setting to work of its new organisation the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 should cease to apply; and the Local Authorities should be relieved of all responsibilities with regard to the Able-bodied and the Unemployed.

53. That upon the necessary legislation being passed, a small Executive Commission be empowered to effect the necessary transfer to the Ministry of Labour of the functions with regard to the Able-bodied and the Unemployed at present performed by the Poor Law Authorities and the Distress Committees under the Unemployed Workmen Act; and to make, as from the Appointed Day, all necessary transfers and adjustments of buildings and officers, Farm Colonies and Labour Exchanges, assets and liabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

We have explained in the Introduction to a companion volume to the present how it was that a Minority of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Unemployed felt compelled to dissent from the conclusions of the Majority with regard to the Poor Law; and to present an alternative report covering the whole ground, and concluding with an alternative Scheme of Reform. With regard to the Unemployed, this Minority considered the Majority Report as even more inadequate and reactionary than with regard to the Poor Law. To undo the work of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, and to thrust back the necessitous workmen into the sphere of a resuscitated Poor Law Authority under a new name, seemed no solution of the grave economic and social problem of Unemployment.

The Minority Report (Part II.), which is here reproduced, accordingly surveys in detail what is actually the provision now made for all sections of the able-bodied men or women in distress; whether by the Boards of Guardians in England, Wales and Ireland, and the Parish Councils in Scotland, under the Poor Law; by the various philanthropic and religious agencies under voluntary management; or by the Distress Committees under the Unemployed Workmen Act. This survey leads naturally to an analysis of the nature and extent of the distress from Unemployment as it actually exists to-day—a survey which is impressive in its revelation of the magnitude, the permanence, and the grave social consequences of the evil. It is for this evil that the Commission was required to find a remedy.

¹ *The Back-up of the Poor Law* (Longmans: 7s. 6d. net).

INTRODUCTION

To find a remedy, it will be clear, is no light task. One thing at once emerges,—the remedy will be neither simple nor obvious. Indeed, he who sets himself to devise a remedy for Unemployment must, of all things, beware of “hammering on the bulge.” We must take to heart Herbert Spencer’s pregnant apologue of the iron plate that bulged.

You see that this wrought-iron plate is not quite flat: it sticks up a little here towards the left—“cockles,” as we say. How shall we flatten it? Obviously, you reply, by hitting down on the part that is prominent. Well, here is a hammer, and I give the plate a blow as you advise. Harder, you say. Still no effect. Another stroke? Well, there is one, and another, and another. The prominence remains, you see: the evil is as great as ever—greater, indeed. But this is not all. Look at the warp which the plate has got near the opposite edge. Where it was flat before it is now curved. A pretty bungle we have made of it. Instead of curing the original defect, we have produced a second. Had we asked an artisan practised in “planishing,” as it is called, he would have told us that no good was to be done, but only mischief, by hitting down on the projecting part. He would have taught us how to give variously-directed and specially-adjusted blows with a hammer elsewhere, so attacking the evil not by direct, but by indirect actions. The required process is less simple than you thought.

For a whole century, whenever the distress from Unemployment has risen temporarily into the consciousness of the governing class, we have been, in our desire to do something promptly for those in need, merely “hammering on the bulge.” It is time to take a lesson from the skilled artisan; to set ourselves really to understand the conditions of the problem; and to adopt, deliberately, patiently and persistently, exactly those measures, *and all those measures*, that are necessary to remedy the evil. What, in the light of the most accurate information and the best science available, those measures are is explained in the last chapter of this volume.

It is, indeed, urgently necessary, whatever may be the nature of the social organisation to which we aspire, that we should take in hand the “cleaning up the base of society,” of which one principal part is here set forth. At present, it is not too much to say that the morass of

Under-Employment and Sweating in which the bottom stratum of the population is condemned to live is draining away the vitality and seriously impairing the vigour of the community as a whole. The continued existence and, we fear, the spreading of this morass does not infect alone those unfortunates whom it engulfs, and the rest of the wage-earning class who are always slipping into it. By the heavy charges that it imposes on us for Poor Relief, hospitals, police and prisons, it lays an unnecessary burden on those who are better off. By the diseases which it engenders and spreads—for a hundred hidden threads of communication connect the slum and the square—it levies a needless toll of death on the families even of the richest. By the deterioration in character and skill of the manual workers whom it degenerates, it insidiously nibbles away at the profits of capital, and puts the enterprises even of the ablest captains of industry increasingly at the mercy of Foreign Competition. Nothing will avail to save a nation whose workers have decayed. From the standpoint of the strictest believer in Private Enterprise, of the staunchest defender of the beneficent administration of the world by the propertied class, it is essential, on the narrowest calculation of profit and loss, to “clean up the base of society.”

To those who look to the substitution of a deliberately ordered Co-operative Commonwealth for the present industrial anarchy, it will be obvious that no such Collectivist community could stand for a year, if it did not drain the morass. What is not always realised is that, even under a completely organised Socialist State, with all industries administered by Municipalities and Government Departments, much the same national organisation for remedying Unemployment would be needed as is here proposed. For the Socialist State would still have to meet the cyclical fluctuations of demand, whether these were caused by periodical famines in China or failures of crops elsewhere. It would still have to meet the seasonal fluctuations in the volume of employment in particular industries; so that the electricity works, the railways and pleasure places, the hop-picking and the harvesting might

have the extra workers that they temporarily required. It would still have to face the necessity of providing for workers displaced by local or industrial changes, and for training them in the new occupations for which they might be best fitted. It is clear that, unless there was, in the Socialist State, something equivalent to a National Labour Exchange, to which all the thousands of Government Departments and Local Authorities resorted, we should have, over again, the keeping of separate reserves of men, the Stagnant Pools of Labour which Mr. Beveridge has so well described,¹ and, in short, all the evils of Under-Employment. The Public Organisation of the Labour Market is, in fact, a requisite for the social health of any industrial community, whether its industry be run on Individualist or on Collectivist lines.

It remains only to add that in the Blue-Book this Minority Report is fortified by all the apparatus for verification. Every fact stated, every piece of evidence, every figure and every quotation is authenticated by exact and detailed reference to authorities and sources. Thus, it may be assumed in reading these pages that every assertion made in them is supported (if only the reader chooses to consult the Blue-Book) by evidence before the Commission, or other Parliamentary papers; by the official proceedings of Local Authorities; or by duly published authorities—often confirmed, indeed, by extensive footnotes giving other instances. But, for convenience of reading, all this apparatus of verification, amounting in bulk to about one-third of the text, has been omitted from the pages of this popular edition.

The allusions to "our Investigators" are in all cases to the ladies and gentlemen whom the Royal Commission selected, with the sanction of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, to investigate particular subjects. Among the most interesting of their valuable Reports (which will be published in due course by the Commission) are those of Mr. A. D. Steel-Maitland and Miss Rose Squire (Industrial and Sanitary Conditions); Mr. Cyril Jackson and Rev. J. C. Pringle (Relief Works); Mr. Cyril Jackson (Boy Labour);

¹ *Unemployment A Problem of Industry*, by W. H. Beveridge, 1909.

INTRODUCTION

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Mr. Thomas Jones and Miss Constance Williams (Outdoor Relief); Dr. J. C. MacVail (Medical Relief); Dr. Ethel Williams, Miss M. Longman, and Miss M. Phillips (Condition of the Children); Miss Harlock (Cases refused Outdoor Relief); Dr. Parsons (Able-bodied in Scottish Poorhouses); Mr. Kaye and Mr. Toynbee (Charities), etc.

SIDNEY AND BEATRICE WEBB.

THERE are to-day, as there were prior to 1834, two separate and distinct Local Authorities providing maintenance for able-bodied destitute persons. Under the Elizabethan Poor Law, down to 1834, the Parish Officers were legally required to find work or maintenance for every able-bodied person without the necessities of life, who was residing in their parish. On the other hand, all wayfaring or vagrant persons were dealt with under the Criminal Law by the Justices and their underlings, the Parish Constables; and the maintenance afforded to them was assumed to be accompanied by some measure of punishment—the stocks, the whipping post, or commitment to the House of Correction. To-day there are again two Local Authorities providing maintenance for able-bodied destitute persons, but with a difference. Whereas, in the eighteenth century, the relief afforded by the Destitution Authorities was considered to be too good for the Vagrant, in the twentieth century it is considered too bad for the Unemployed. The Boards of Guardians are required to find maintenance, not only for all destitute able-bodied persons resident in their Unions, but also for every Vagrant claiming their hospitality. Alongside them there is, since 1905, in every important town, a second authority at work, the Distress Committee administering the Unemployed Workmen Act. These Committees were intended to provide only for the *bona fide* Unemployed, that is to say, for men and women who, having been in full work at full wages, find themselves without employment through no

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fault of their own. But, as a matter of fact, as we shall see, the Distress Committees are providing spasmodic maintenance, not only for the Unemployed in this sense, but also for many of the Under-employed and for some of the Unemployables. What they cannot lawfully do is to give any assistance to Vagrants until these have settled down for a year, or to Sweated Workers, so long as these remain in constant employment. Athwart the operations of both these Authorities come all the voluntary charitable agencies, from the spasmodic "Mayor's Funds" and newspaper funds of times of trade depression up to the permanent Shelters, Labour Homes, and Working Colonies of bodies like the Church Army and the Salvation Army.

THE PUBLIC ORGANISATION OF
THE LABOUR MARKET

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